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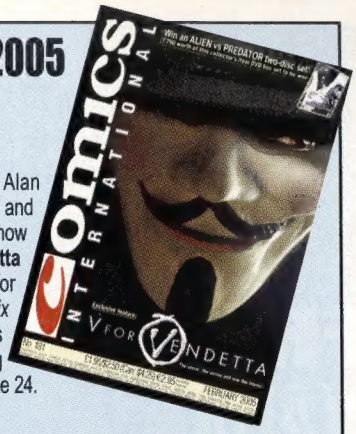

Inside this issue

COVER: It took long enough! While Alan Moore's more recent works, **From Hell** and **League of Extraordinary Gentlemen** are now screen history, his seminal **V for Vendetta** and **Watchmen** have gathered dust for decades. Finally, with their extended *Matrix* endeavour over, the Wachowski Brothers have returned to their earlier project, getting V for Vendetta on screen. Full story on page 24.

News

NEWS INTERNATIONAL: **DC All-Stars** lure top creator back to Batman... First black superhero gets profile boosting makeover... New publisher emulates Image... DC heading for second **Crisis**?... **Abadazad** creators resurface with Image fantasy mini... *Pi* director previews next movie in Vertigo hardcover... **The Pact** reforms at Image... **Marvel Adventures** line debuts... Dynamite lands She-Devil with a Sword... UK indie turns to pulps... plus much more **5**
COVER STORY: Behind the scenes on V for Vendetta, from concept to celluloid **24**
WILL EISNER: Following his recent death, tributes to the life and talents of possibly the industry's greatest visionary **26**
FRAME TO FRAME: Mike Conroy looks at the casting of *V for Vendetta* and a couple of animated projects, including yet another from Stan Lee. **30**

Regulars

COMICS ECONOMICS: The top 100 sellers for October. **33**
TALKING SHOP: Cutting edge retailer Stephen Holland produces his monthly overview of life in the comics-buying frontline. **32**
NOVEL GRAPHICS: Paul Gravett on the world of graphic novels. **34**
BIFF'S ILLUMINATIONS: Pick hits from March-shipping titles **37**
NETWORKS: Chris Rice's round-up of news and gossip from the Internet, plus Rich Johnston's *In the Gutter* and Chris Bunting's *Comics Webworld*. **46**
REVIEWS: Capsule critiques of the best (and worst) of this month's titles.. **48**

Listings

ADVANCE LISTINGS: US and international English-language comics on sale in specialist shops in March, plus the month's UK newsstand titles. **36**
EVENTS GUIDE: Key comics events in the next six months. **66**

Reader Access

COMPETITION: Win a set of 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment's new Alien vs Predator DVD box set. **25**
Q&A: Set your mind at rest over niggling comics queries, or impress readers with your knowledge. **44**
LETTERS: Readers' writes plus Mike Kazybrid's *Comic Cuts* **57**
CLASSIFIED: Comics for Sale, Comics Wanted, General Announcements and small press listings **65**

Directory

WEBSITE INDEX: Comics creators, publisher and back issue dealer links **59**
RETAIL INDEX: The most comprehensive listing of international comics stores **60**
WORLD FESTIVAL GUIDE: Leading comics events in the year ahead **62**
PUBLISHER INDEX: Details of top US, UK, French and Italian publishers **63**
MAIL ORDER INDEX: Postal specialists for comics and peripherals **64**

Sez Dez

Editorial
Dez Skinn

YOU often hear of people aspiring to become comics writers or artists, but – outside of those already in the industry, who'd actually have a clue about editors or publishers, let alone want to become one?

Actually, now I come to think of it, there is one exception I know of. It's the kind of unlikely story you just couldn't make up...

It was back when I used to be a bit of a mover, shaker and headline maker myself, in those heady days of turning around the fortunes of Marvel UK, or British Marvel as it had previously been known. At the time I was spending most weekends at my girlfriend's home in Sidcup, where they had a long back garden with a garage at the end, facing out to a wide mudtrack path that you could just about manage to drive a car down.

Their land next to the garage was mainly overgrown and quite open, the fence having blown down long ago. Enjoying the contrast with being a desk jockey, I decided one Saturday to get physical and burn all the deadwood, long dried grass and general rubbish that had accumulated.

As bonfire flames leaped into the sky, they attracted the attention of two young cyclists who, while admiring the darting tongues of fire, continued their empassioned debate. "Wish I could be Carmine Infantino," one remarked, mispronouncing the name of DC's then-publisher as *Infantin-o*. Stunned by hearing a 12-or-so year old mention his name, I – in my guise as scruffy gardener – just had to set him straight (it comes with being an editor, you just can't stop yourself sometimes). "It's pronounced *Infanteeno*," I corrected.

"Huh! How would *you* know?" the upstart replied, casting an obvious reference to my attire and menial role making it impossible for the likes of me to be aware of the intricacies of the cultish comics world. "Because I work in comics," I replied, wishing I hadn't interrupted them. "Fwah, itchy beard, mister!" was the reply.

As I was trying to figure whether that was youth parlance or a reference to something possibly caught in my actual chin hair, his pal piped up: "Well I know a man with a comic shop who knows Dez Skinn!"

"Er, that's my name," I slowly and quietly answered, seriously wishing I'd never started this. *"Itchy beard!"* they called back in nigh-perfect unision.

What followed was a call to a confused neighbouring fellow-gardener, asking for a confirmation of my first name (she didn't know my last and looked very puzzled) and a rush indoors to return clutching a handful of homework, readers' letters for typing up for the next **Hulk Comic**. Now convinced I was me (always a relief) they quietly cycled off... only to return, ten minutes later. The one who Knew a Man Who thrust a copy of **Savage Sword of Conan** into my hands for signing, while his cynical friend offered up a chunk of the plain card back of a Weetabix box.

"Don't you have any of mine?" I foolishly ventured. "Nah," he replied. "I prefer Carmine Infantin-o's!"

***Comics International** editor Dez Skinn's career in the industry spans 30 years. Titles he has created include **Doctor Who Weekly**, **House of Hammer**, **Hulk Comic**, **Starburst** and **Warrior**. Ex-editorial director of Marvel UK – where his Stan Lee-coined Sez Dez column had a monthly audience of over 500,000 – he has also edited titles including **Buster**, **Conan**, **MAD**, **Star Wars Weekly**, **2000 AD Presents**, **Rogue Trooper** and **Spider-Man** and won over 20 Eagle Awards. His co-created **V for Vendetta** is finally about to earn him some money back!*

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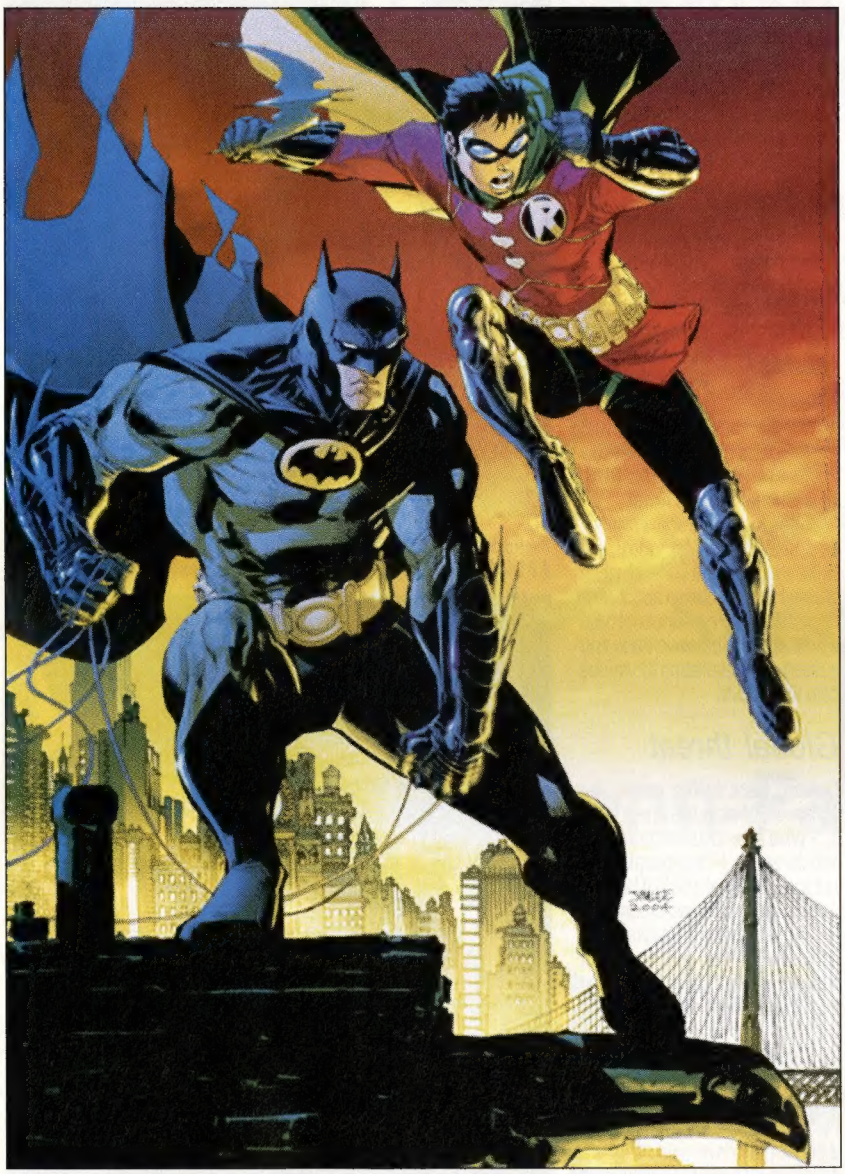
All-Star comic teams Dark Knight creator with Jim Lee



Above: Jim Lee promo art for DC's forthcoming **All-Star: Batman and Robin** series.

DC to boost core heroes with reader friendly titles by Frank Miller and other top-selling writers and artists

PROBABLY encouraged that the sales boost **Batman** got throughout Jeph Loeb and Jim Lee's 12-issue run on the comic has been mirrored during Lee and writer Brian Azzarello's current year-long partnership on **Superman**, DC is to launch a line of titles starring its major heroes in stories by top-line creators.

Described as civilian friendly and obviously intended to take advantage of increased public interest ignited by the forthcoming *Batman Begins* – which premieres in the US on June 17 – as well as by the in development *Superman Returns*, the **DC All-Star** series are to be less continuity reliant than other current DCU titles. Although set in the present day, they are to feature "timeless, iconic, pre-**Crisis** versions of the DCU's top characters."

Alan Moore

"**All-Stars** is all about delivering on the expectations of the characters. These will be versions of the characters that people expect to read if they haven't read a Superman or Batman comic in a while. These are the things they'll want to see, and this is us delivering to the fans exactly what they want in a great format with great talent so they can truly enjoy the characters they know and love. Simple as that," stated Dan Didio. DC's vice president, executive editor – DC Universe. He cites Alan Moore's 1986 two-parter *Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?* – lauded for its fresh take on the Man of Steel and his supporting cast – as the model for the **All-Star** line, which kicks off in June with **Batman and Robin**.

Year One

The series is to be written by Frank Miller, who is widely acknowledged as one of the premiere Bat-writers. His reputation stems from his iconoclastic re-imagining of the Gotham City hero in 1986's **Batman: The Dark Knight Returns** and from the following year's *Year One* [in **Batman** #404-407] although **Batman: The Dark Knight Strikes Again** – his 2001 sequel to his 1986 magnum opus – failed to live up to expectations.

Looking to build on his success with **Batman** and **Superman**, **Batman and Robin** is drawn by Jim Lee, who said, "It might be best to look at it as *Batman: Year Two* in the Millerverse of Batman. I assume it will feed off what Frank set up with *Year One* years ago and set up themes which will resonate with those seen in **Dark Knight Returns** and **Dark Knight Strikes Again**. It's a fresh examination of the complex relationship between Batman and Robin/Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson."

Following **All-Star: Batman and Robin** in July is **All-Star: Superman**, which reunites the former **New X-Men** team of Grant Morrison and artist Frank Quitely.

● Also in the pipeline is **All-Star: Wonder Woman** with the creative team rumoured to be Geoff Johns and Adam Hughes.

"Definitive Batman" creators to reunite

ALMOST 30 years on, the creative team responsible for one of the most highly acclaimed story arcs in Batman's 66-year history is getting back together for a sequel to their 1977 six-parter.

Steve Englehart, penciller Marshal Rogers, inker Terry Austin and even letterer John Workman are reuniting to continue a story that ran bimonthly through **Detective Comics** #471-476.

Classic love interest

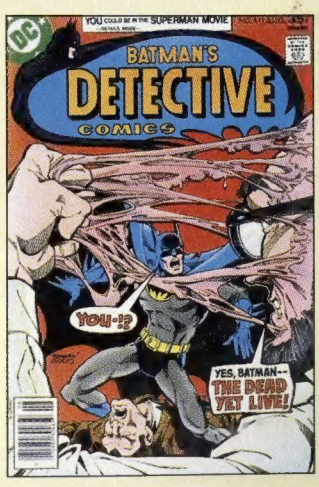
Now seen as part of the longer *Strange Apparitions* saga – which began in #469 and ended in #479 – the serial is considered by many to feature the definitive versions not only of Batman but also of the Joker and the Penguin. It also spotlighted Deadshot, reintroduced Hugo Strange – last seen in **Batman** #1 – and brought Batman a classic love interest in the shape of Silver St Cloud.

According to Englehart, the six-issue sequel – which is entitled **Batman: Dark Detective** – is to be released biweekly through May, June, and July, bracketing the release of *Batman Begins*, which hits US screens on June 17.

"It features the long – really long – awaited return of Silver St Cloud, and the Joker, with first appearances – by us – of Two-Face, the Scarecrow and, uh, Dr Double X," stated the writer. "The Scarecrow's in the movie, too, but we did our own take on him in our story."

Joker for governor

"Silver's moved on," Englehart added, "and the last thing she wants to do is meet Bruce Wayne again but fate, you know... And the Joker is running for governor with a simple slogan: 'Vote for me or I'll kill you.'"



First black superhero gets Marvel makeover

House Party *director makes comics debut with Black Panther, planning total character makeover in tandem with* **Amazing Spider-Man** *artist*

HE HAS been a part of the Marvel Universe for almost 40 years but the Black Panther has never really made the grade as an A-list hero.

Black film director Reggie Hudlin – whose credits include *House Party* and *The Great White Hype* – is out to change that. He does not view the Wakandan warrior also known as T'Challa as an also ran. Far from it, as he explained to **CI**, "I've always loved the Black Panther. As a black person I thought he was a fantastic character... he was the first black superhero and there was no apologising for him... It wasn't like 'Well, he's not quite perfect but... we'll take what we can get.' It's like 'No. That's a completely kick ass iconic character.'

"To me the best characters are ones that are so unique that they become templates for a style of character," he added. "Superman is like that. Captain America is like that. Spider-Man is like that. I don't think there's anyone like the Black Panther so the strength of the idea is really appealing to me."

Since the Black Panther first appeared in **Fantastic Four** #52 other black heroes have joined the Marvel Universe, among them the Falcon, Black Goliath and Luke Cage, Power Man. Hudlin, who is teaming up with **Amazing Spider-Man** artist John Romita Jr to relaunch **Black Panther**, was only too happy to highlight what he thinks makes the Wakandan monarch stand head and shoulders above his peers. "I love those other characters, particularly Luke Cage – which is why I'll have those two teaming up and hanging out during my second story arc – but the Black Panther is a king... of his own country. I guess the thing that really appeals to me about the Black Panther is really Wakanda, I think you have to start at the country itself.

> ***"Black Panther is not only emblematic of their warrior culture, their high technology... he is their spiritual leader."***
> *...Reggie Hudlin, writer*

"The fact is it's a country that's never been conquered and, because they [the Wakandans] have never been conquered, they've never had their libraries burnt, they've never had their cultural development broken," explained Hudlin, who added, "If you look historically there are African tribes that had metal alloys when folks in your country were still living in caves. So if you say here's these people with this huge scientific head-start, what if that never stopped? You have a country that doesn't even pump the petroleum it has because it's got alternative fuel sources. It's a country that has the cure for cancer. It's just a highly evolved country – not only technologically but also because they have a strong spiritual grounding.

"The Black Panther is not only emblematic of all that – their warrior culture, their high technology – he is their spiritual leader," stated Hudlin, who co-wrote 2003's Kyle Baker-illustrated **Birth of a Nation** graphic novel.

Agreeing that he sees Wakanda as a undiluted African ideal, the writer suggested the fictional nation allowed for speculation about what might have been had Africa not been devastated by the slave trade and subsequent exploitation by various colonial powers.

Global threat

Getting back to the comic, he continued, "Wakanda is a great What If...? What if the culture and the backs and the spirit of these people were not broken? What would it be?"

It is against this background that Hudlin is reworking T'Challa's origin across the first half dozen issues of **Black Panther**, which Marvel has upgraded to ongoing series after it was initially conceived as a six-parter.

Hudlin says he has no plans to tamper with the origin as laid down by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. "It's just fleshing out all the implications thereof. They never said, 'This is a country that's never been conquered and this is this great warrior culture that – sort of like Vietnam – has beaten every opponent they've gone up against.' So, I said, 'Let's make that explicit.'

"The first issue starts around 5BC and we see Wakanda through the ages up to the modern day," he continued. "We take that two-page origin story [from **Fantastic Four** #53] and really flesh it out so we understand the country, the man and the kind of global threat that a country like Wakanda could become just by its very existence."

While Hudlin plans to emphasise the hero's Wakandan heritage rather than sidelining it as merely a part of the back story, that is just one aspect of the writer's approach to what he hopes will become the definitive Black Panther. "We are going to see more of him as the guy who is the beneficiary of thousands of years of military strategy.

"If you have this warrior culture... they follow our fights... they've got it all documented and it gets handed to each generation," explained the writer, who said he is going to work in aspects from every era of the Panther's history – not just the acclaimed runs spearheaded by writers Don McGregor [in **Jungle Action**, 1973-76] and – in the recently cancelled **Black Panther** title – by [Christopher J] Priest but also from Jack Kirby's infamous solo work with the African warrior during 1977 and 1978.

"We're going to see more of him as the master planner, as a really ferocious fighter and we're definitely going to see more of his personality by giving him a wider range of characters to bounce off of."

Pictured: John Romita Jr story pages from the first issue of Marvel's $2.99 **Black Panther** *series, which launches on February 2.*

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Leaping from Image into self-publishing

THE PAST few months have seen the formation of several new comics publishers, among them Desperado – an Image imprint, Speakeasy, the CrossGen-like Kandora and Gotham Studio's Asia, the **Spider-Man India** publisher's spin-off.

The latest newcomer is Alias Enterprises, which was set up by Brett Burner – owner of print broker Lamp Post Publications – and former **X-Man** and **Adventures of Superman** artist Mike S Miller to facilitate the production of titles to be released by Image. The company, which has placed only three projects with the Californian co-operative, has suddenly elected to publish under its own banner from April.

Image connection

While its **Lions, Tigers & Bears** plus **Lullaby: Wisdom Seeker** and **The Imaginaries** *[see below]* all appear on the Image schedule, Alias's line-up features a number of comics with strong links to that umbrella company.

Among them are **The 10th Muse** – which was published by Image before moving to Avatar only to disappear – and several titles being produced under the auspices of Dabel Brothers Productions. The studio, which was responsible for **Dragonlance: The Legend of Huma**, **The Hedge Knight** and **The Seventh Shrine**, has mainly released its comics under the Image umbrella although it did make a move to Devil's Due, which soon ended in acrimony.

Other existing titles coming to the Alias roster include **Pakkin's Land** – a former Caliber comic – and **Killer Stunts**, the movie rights to which were snapped up after it was previewed at San Diego in 2003 – even though a single issue has yet to be published.

Among the new titles are the Miller-written **Deal with the Devil**, **Elsinore** and **Judo Girl**.

*Pictured: Story pages from the first issues of two of Alias Enterprises' launch titles – **Deal with the Devil** [above – art by Sherwin Schwartzrock] and **Elsinore** [left – art by Brian Denham].*

While Alias seems, on the surface to follow the Image template by offering a publishing umbrella for disparate creators and studios, Miller assured **CI** the San Diego-based enterprise intends to be more involved with the titles it takes on.

Trouble in Imagined Nation

THE IMAGINARIES has much in common with two recently-launched series – Mike Bullock and Jack Lawrence's **Lions, Tigers & Bears** and **Lullaby: Wisdom Seeker** by Mike S Miller, Ben Avery and Hector Sevilla.

All three four-parters are titles produced by Alias *[see main story]* for publication under the Image banner and all three have strong associations with children and the concepts that capture a youngster's imagination. The three minis also share a theme of coexisting fantasy worlds and, in the case of the new title – which is also written by Miller and Avery – this is the Imagined Nation, a land where the made-up creatures of childhood go when they are discarded.

*Pictured: Cover art for **The Imaginaries** #1 [above] and a story page from the same issue of the Alias title [right]; art by Mike S Miller and Greg Titus.*

The idea came from Miller, who told **CI**, "Children have powerful imaginations. Their faith gives life to their creations in a unique way. When they start to grow up and for whatever reason stop believing in childish things like superheroes and imaginary friends or that their stuffed animals are alive... those creatures disappear from their minds and reappear in the Imagined Nation."

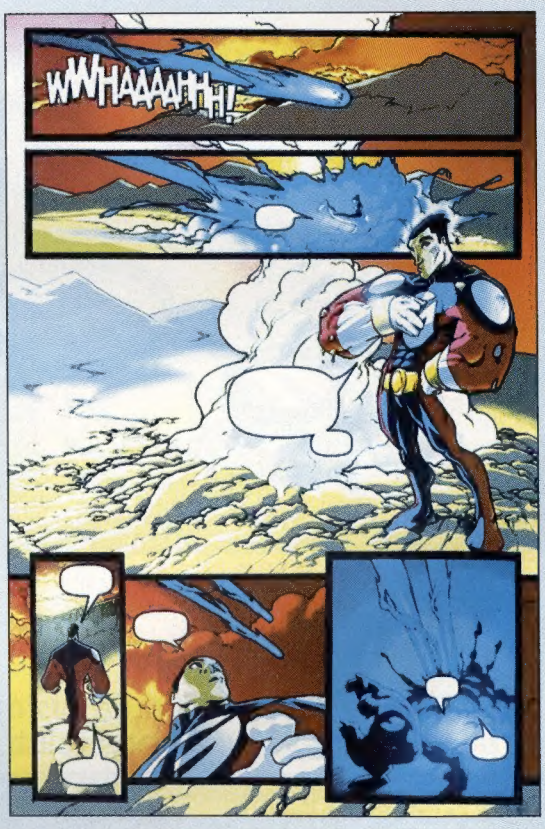
Superhero G

Continuing, the **G.I. Joe vs Transformers** artist, who also serves as art director at Dabel Brothers Productions, said "**The Imaginaries** is about one of these characters, Superhero G, who ends up in this new world and finds that one of the most powerful super-villains a child has ever imagined has taken control of the Imagined Nation. It's become a fascist/communist/socialist/dictatorship under the reign of the Ice Queen and her legion of Nazty Bears."

Phantom Lands

"Being a superhero, he dons a disguise and gathers a ragtag group of superhero sidekicks – all superheroes having been banished to the Phantom Lands when the Ice Queen took power – to take back the Imagined Nation," added Miller, who is also drawing the series in collaboration with Greg Titus, who pencilled **Syn** for Dark Horse's Rocket line. "Of course, things don't always go as planned..."

***The Imaginaries** #1, priced $2.95, ships on March 16.*



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GRANT GEISSMAN

GRANT Geissman has scored a coup for his follow up to ***Tales of Terror: The EC Companion****. The musician-cum-author has unearthed* Wanted for Murder, *a previously unpublished EC story drawn by Al Williamson, which is to be included in Harper Design's 272-page* ***Foul Play! The Art and Artists of the Notorious 1950s E.C. Comics****. The 8½x11" softcover features chapters on 14 EC artists, each accompanied by a story by that artist. Among those spotlighted in the profusely-illustrated $29.95 volume which goes on sale in March, are Harvey Kurtzman, Johnny Craig and Jack Davis.*

Stardust Kid next for Abadazad team

J M DEMATTEIS and artist Mike Ploog are developing a new all-ages fantasy comic to replace **Abadazad**, a casualty of CrossGen's collapse.

While the CrossGen title has now been licensed for a series of children's novels by Disney's Hyperion Books offshoot, the two creators are pressing ahead with **The Stardust Kid**. This is to debut as a five-issue Desperado Publishing mini to be released under the Image label beginning in May.

Describing the new series, DeMatteis said, "Twelve-year-old Cody DiMarco's best friend is Paul Brightfield. The bond between the two boys is deeper than anyone could ever suspect. You see, Paul Brightfield isn't human: he's the last of The Old Ones, ancient elemental beings from The Time Before – when no man walked the Earth and magic was a given – and Cody is the only one in all the world who knows Paul's secret.

"One October night, Paul Brightfield vanishes... at the same moment that, in nearby Wilde Park, a massive cocoon burrows up out of the earth. Within the cocoon lies a hate-filled creature that will soon destroy Cody's life – and the lives of everyone he loves," continued the writer, whose credits include **The Spectre** and, as co-writer, **Formerly Known as the Justice League**.

Above: Mike Ploog's promo art for Image/Desperado's five-issue ***The Stardust Kid****.*

"Mike Ploog and I wanted to follow up **Abadazad** with another all-ages fantasy, a series that would be just as magical – and kid-friendly – but strike out into somewhat darker territory," DeMatteis stated. "I turned to the **Stardust Kid**: a project I've nurtured for nearly two decades.

"Despite the long development, it wasn't until Mike and I started working on it together that the story really came together," he added.

$1 oneshot set to create upheaval in DC Universe

SPECULATION is rife among the comics fraternity that, with the 20th anniversary of its universe-amalgamating **Crisis on Infinite Earths** looming, DC is planning another continuity-straightening event of a similar magnitude.

While some point to signs in such titles as **Adam Strange**, **Teen Titans** and **JSA**, it is evident that some major development is being orchestrated.

The latest evidence comes in the form of an 80-page oneshot that features nearly every major character in the DC Universe. It not only builds upon events revealed in the recently-concluded **Identity Crisis** seven-parter but also serves as a prologue to a number of spin-off miniseries scheduled for later this year.

Priced at only $1 – another indication that DC considers it to be a key issue – **DC Countdown** #1 is divided in to five chapters, which are written by Geoff Johns, Greg Rucka and Judd Winick. Ed Benes, Rags Morales, Phil Jimenez, Ivan Reis and Jesus Saiz are pencilling one part each.

The bargain-priced ***DC Countdown*** *features cover art* [above] *pencilled by Jim Lee and painted by Alex Ross. An 80-pager, the $1 one-shot ships on March 30.*

Years-long story

While refusing to discuss any story details, Winick revealed the initial idea came from Dan Didio, DC's vice president and executive editor of the DC Universe. "The five of us – myself, Greg, Geoff, Dan and also [DC editor] Eddie Berganza – locked ourselves up for four days and came up with what will be a very large story, one that will unfold over the next couple of years."

Continuing, he revealed, "There are certain story elements that come right out of **Identity Crisis** but also I'd say that creatively, the creative spirit of **Identity Crisis** lives on through this. Many of the turns and sort of character-based bent that you got with **Identity Crisis** and the sort of writing that Geoff, Greg and myself have always leaned towards, we've now been allowed to embrace fuller. We're now allowed to write stories which are for keeps."

Referring to **DC Countdown** as chapter one in a much larger story, the writer continued, "When we were discussing **Identity Crisis** way back when, the whole concept behind **Identity Crisis** was taking all these classic characters and also not-so-classic characters that people may not be familiar with and the point is that the strength is in the story itself. It won't be about you having to have followed the DCU for decades and someone will turn the page and a character will pop-up that you've never heard of that's supposed to have resonance but doesn't because you don't know who it is. We're not doing that. We're writing the story from the perspective that anybody can pick up this story – even coming cold to the DCU – and find it riveting. It's all character-based. You have large iconic characters and you have rather small ones."

Above: Cover art for the first $2.50 issues of two six-part spin-offs from ***DC Countdown. Day of Vengeance****,* by Walter Simonson, left *and* ***The Omac Project****,* right, by Jose Ladrónn.

One Man Army

The first two **DC Countdown** spin-offs have also been scheduled.

The first of the six-issue minis is the $2.50 **Day of Vengeance** on which **Fables** writer Bill Willingham is joined by **Beast Boy** penciller Justiniano and inker Walden (**JLA**) Wong, who are also drawing **The Human Race**, a Ben Raab-written seven-parter that debuts from DC on March 16.

Day of Vengeance, which premieres on April 20, brings the almost-forgotten Ragman to centre stage as he teams up with the Enchantress to prevent the Spectre wiping all magic from the DCU.

It is followed a week later by **The Omac Project** by Rucka and Saiz.

Also priced $2.50, this involves Batman, Checkmate, the controller of a spy satellite that keeps surveillance on every hero and villain in the DCU and a One Man Army Corps, which has ben designed specifically to oppose metahumans.

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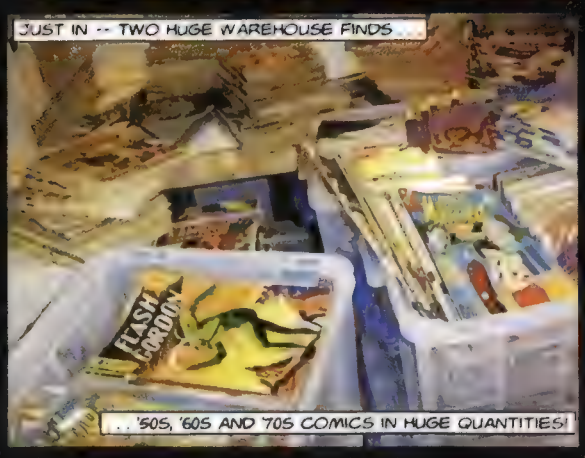

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Destiny artist previews movie

BRAD Pitt may well be able to take credit for bringing Vertigo's latest hardcover graphic novel into existence.

In 2002 the film star walked off the set of *The Fountain* – and into the role of Achilles in Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* – after disputes with Darren Aranofsky, the director of the Warner Bros/New Regency movie. These centred on the complexities of the script.

After more than two years *The Fountain* is back in production but, with the budget cut from $75 million to $40 million, Wolverine actor Hugh Jackman is taking Pitt's part while *The Mummy*'s Rachel Weisz has been brought in as the female lead, replacing Cate Blanchett.

Most filmmakers probably consider such incidents to be part and parcel of making movies but Aranofsky chose an unusual way of dealing with the frustrations of having a major project put on hold. He decided to turn his script, which was co-written by newcomer Ari Handel, into a graphic novel.

Above: Kent Williams' cover art for ***The Fountain****, a 176-page hardcover Vertigo graphic novel.*

Batman: Year One

Probably best-known to comic fans as the director of the aborted movie *Batman: Year One* – based on Frank Miller's 1987 four-parter – Aranofsky made his film debut with 1998's provocative *Pi* and followed it up with the Golden Globe and Academy Award-nominated *Requiem for a Dream* [2000]. He was on board to direct the adaptation of Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' **Watchmen** until Warner Bros moved *The Fountain* back into production late last year. An acknowledged comics fan, Aranofsky's next project is a film version of Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima's **Lone Wolf and Cub**.

Aranofsky's third movie, *The Fountain* is about "a quest for immortality – via a 'tree of life' found in Central America – this is attempted in three different centuries, the ultimate lesson being that death, as part of the process of rebirth, is to be embraced, not feared."

Vertigo's 8½x11½" graphic novel is being painted by Kent Williams, a fine artist whose other comics credits include **Blood: A Tale** and **Destiny: A Chronicle of Deaths Foretold**.

The 176-page **Fountain** focuses on Tomas, who – in different eras – is a warrior, doctor and explorer. It follows him in 1535, during an ancient Mayan war; in the present day, as he desperately searches for the cure for cancer; and in the far future – through the vast reaches of space – as he tries to beat death and prolong the life of the woman he loves.

The Fountain *hardcover ships on August 24, priced $29.99.*

THE PRODUCER of **Judge Dredd**, **Strontium Dog** *and other* **2000 AD***-based audio dramas has now turned its attention to Bryan Talbot's classic comics saga of a hero fighting to save the Multiverse from destruction. Scheduled to go on sale in early March, Big Finish's adaptation of* **The Adventures of Luther Arkwright** *stars* Blackpool*'s David Tennant, Paul (*Blake's 7*) Darrow and* Moondial*'s Siri O'Neal among others. Shown above is the cover to the 3-CD set* [art by Talbot]*, which runs to approximately three hours and retails for £17.99.*

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Image youngsters reform 1994 team

THE SHARED universe concept is once again finding favour at Image.

Despite previous abortive efforts to bring together the various disparate superhero contingents that exist under the California co-operative's umbrella, former publisher Jim Valentino is spearheading another attempt.

This comes in the form of a four-parter which revives the name but not the line-up of a super-team that had a short-lived existence in a three-issue 1994 mini. The original Pact consisted of a quartet created by Valentino especially for the series – and unseen since – while the new roster is made up of heroes who have each appeared in their own Image title although unconnected and distinctly separate from each other until now.

Above: The cover to ***The Pact*** *#1 features yet another recreation of the cover to* ***Fantastic Four*** *#1, by former Image publisher Jim Valentino. The $2.99 four-parter debuts from Image on March 9.*

Dysfunctional families

In the first issue of Image's latest **Pact** mini, Valentino brings together four young heroes – the current incarnation of his own ShadowHawk, Robert Kirkman's Invincible and Phil Hester's Firebreather as well as, from the pages of **Noble Causes**, Jay Faerber's Zephyr. In a somewhat intriguing move, he is then handing over to Faerber and artist Carlo Barbieri to continue the story in #2.

They in turn are followed by Hester and Carlos Rodriguez with Kirkman's concluding chapter drawn by Jason Howard.

Valentino's reasons for choosing to put ShadowHawk, Invincible, Firebreather and Zephyr together in The Pact are fairly straightforward. "They're all roughly the same age, around 17. They all come from rather dysfunctional families and they're all trying to figure out their place in the world, not just as people, but as heroes.

"I think this team has all the elements of a great series," the former Image publisher bravely added. "One that can touch upon the drama and the humour of being a teenager as well as provide some kick-ass action. I think there will be a lot of great stories to be told, these will just be the first four."

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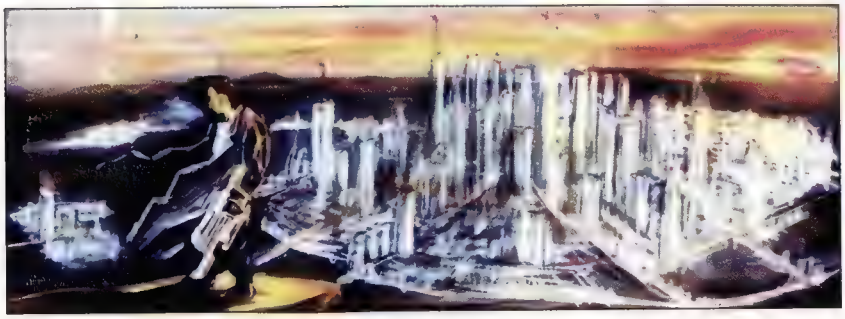
HAVING been associated with comics adaptations of Michael Moorcock's various genre-busting ***Elric*** *novels for more than two decades, P Craig Russell is finally turning his attention to the archetypal sword and sorcery hero created by Robert E Howard. While the acclaimed fantasy author has chosen to team up with illustrator Walter Simonson on DC's* ***Elric: The Making of a Sorcerer*** *– the first original comics story to feature his albino Melnibonéan – the opera-loving Russell is now writing and drawing a three-part spin-off from Dark Horse's monthly* ***Conan*** *title. The $2.99* ***Conan and the Jewels of Gwahlur*** *[sample art above], premiering on April 6, is an adaptation of a Howard story first published in* ***Weird Tales*** *in 1935. Set shortly before the Cimmerian became king, it involves a dancing girl posing as the dead oracle of a primitive cult.*



Scottish anime for "Orwellian Batman"

HAILING from north of the border and the home of **The Dandy** and **The Beano**, the latest British entrant in the new indie publisher sweepstakes is Dundee-based Dreaded Realities Comics.

With two further titles already planned for later this year, the fledgling indie is kicking off in April with the £2.50 **Xevicom**. Described by creator/writer Darren Reid as Batman in George Orwell's **1984**, the comic – which is set in the futuristic city of the same name – is being drawn in a style artist Alex Cowles refers to as Scottish anime.

"**Xevicom** is based around a post-apocalyptic world where democratic government has collapsed and everyday life is dominated by large corporations," explained Reid, who said the first 12 issues of the series form one storyline.

"Law and order has broken down and life in the city for most citizens is desperate at best. In our title, each month for the first four issues four unique heroes will be written about, looking at the way they have coped with the end of civilisation and what has driven them to their desperate vigilante status," he added.

Lined up to follow **Xevicom** is **Spirits**. Written by Reid, it is being drawn by George Williams. Details of the third Dreaded Realities comic have yet to be announced.

*Above: The cover to **Xevicom** #1. Top: A story page from the same issue; art by Alex Cowles.*

Marvel reinvents its jungle girl

LIBERTY Meadows cartoonist Frank Cho's first major work for Marvel is to create a new version of a jungle heroine who – although she first appeared in her own short-lived 1972 series – is probably best-known as Ka-Zar's mate.

Discussing his long-awaited **Shanna the She-Devil** mini, the writer/artist announced, "This isn't the same Shanna character from the 1970s. It's a completely different character who happens to share the same moniker. The background story is that the Nazi Regime tried to breed an army of super soldiers for over 70 years. But the main story takes place in present time."

Cho, who says the series has no connection to Shanna's previous stomping ground – the Savage Land, describes his Marvel Knights seven-parter as part *Jurassic Park* and part *Mysterious Island*. Referring to the storyline, he explained. "A small American military squad crashlands on a mysterious island overrun with dinosaurs. They have no idea where they are and how to get off the island.

"Five years pass," the cartoonist continued, "the military unit has built a fort and has learned to survive by hunting and scavenging. During one of these hunting/scavenging trips, they discover a hidden and recently abandoned Nazi medical lab full of genetic experiments – Shanna.

"The question is: will Shanna help this military unit get off this island or will her genetic programming destroy them all," he asked, rhetorically.

*Above: Frank Cho's cover art for the fourth issue of the **Shanna the She-Devil** seven-parter he is writing and drawing for Marvel Knights.*

***Shanna the She-Devil** #1, priced $3.50, ships February 2.*

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*CONTINUING to recruit writers from outside the comics community, Marvel has drafted in Orson Scott Card to work with **1602** artist Andy Kubert on its latest **Ultimate** miniseries. An award-winning science fiction and fantasy author, Card – whose credits include **Ender's Game** and **Speaker for the Dead** – is writing **Ultimate Iron Man**. The $2.99 six-parter, which reveals The Ultimates member's origin, premieres on March 2. The first issue is to feature alternate foil covers – one each by Kubert and Bryan Hitch* [shown above].

She Devil returns

LESS than a year after launching his publishing subsidiary as a Devil's Due imprint with a licensed **Army of Darkness** movie spin-off, Dynamic Forces head honcho Nick Barrucci, has opted to commence releasing comics under his own banner.

First up from Barrucci's newly-independent Dynamite Entertainment is another licensed title, one that resurrects a flame-haired, sword-wielding heroine who first appeared in 1973 in Marvel's **Conan the Barbarian** #23. Unseen in comics since Cross Plains abortive 1999 revival, Red Sonja – the star of several short-lived Marvel series – makes her return in April in a preview of her ongoing series, which premieres in June.

Wonder Woman

Red Sonja #0, which is being offered at the bargain price of 25¢, includes a new 15-page standalone story from the series' creative team of **Angel** artist Mel Rubi and co-writers Michael Avon Oeming and Mike (**Lucifer**) Carey.

*Above: The cover to tissue #0 of Dynamite Entertainment's **Red Sonja** series; art by Greg Land.*

"This Sonja won't be Wonder Woman with red hair," promised Oeming, the **Powers** artist who is also writing Marvel's imminent **Stormbreaker: The Saga of Beta Ray Bill** six-parter. "She won't be perfect, she won't always be nice and she won't always do the right thing, especially in our modern terms of what is right or wrong."

● Created by Roy Thomas and British artist Barry Windsor-Smith, Marvel's She Devil with a Sword – as she was often referred to – was based on Conan creator Robert E Howard's Red Sonya of Rogatine, a 16th century swashbuckler.

Gloom for UK leader

ONE OF the fastest-rising stars among the new generation of British comics writers is to introduce a pulp-inspired hero at the UK's leading publisher of adventure comics titles.

In tandem with **Comicana** creator Dan Boultwood, Tony Lee is bringing The Gloom to St Albans-based AP Comics. Co-created by the writer and artist – who describe him as an avenging angel for 1940s Manhattan – the character makes his debut this May in the first issue of his own $3.50/£2.50 six-parter.

Cliffhanger serials

Talking with **CI** about the project, Lee – whose major credit to date is Mongoose Publishing's **Starship Troopers** graphic novel trilogy – said, "The Gloom is our addition to those black and white Saturday morning at the movies serials – you know, like *King of the Rocketmen* and suchlike. The Gloom is basically a setting – in this case '40s Manhattan – where characters that are very similar to our childhood heroes battle evil. But at the same time we throw a little bit extra in... The Gloom isn't just a man with a gun, he's been given a job by the Angel of Vengeance himself."

Lee said **The Gloom** came about as the result of him and Boultwood being put together by chance at this year's Bristol Comics Expo and discovering they shared interests. "Three hours later, it's 5.00 am and we're still in the bar. We're working out all the things we liked about the pulp stories like the Spider, the Spirit, Doc Savage, the Shadow – all those classic stories. We decided that a man with a gun was a bit too similar to the Shadow/Spider type of stories, so we worked on a back plot involving the Angel of Vengeance. And Dan really wanted to draw a monkey with a fez, so we created the character of the Professor.

"We wanted a name that was gloomy – and after some bloody awful ones decided that the Gloom worked just as well," the writer added. "After all, it was never going to be totally serious."

*Pictured: The first two pages from the first issue of AP Comics' **The Gloom** six-parter; art by Daniel Boultwood.*

Hellfire guns

Asked why he wanted to recreate that 1940s milieu especially when – *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* aside – such settings are not proving very popular, Lee responded, "I think retro is cool as long as it isn't rehashed or re-imagined in a way that leaves it pale. **The Gloom** is a tongue-in-cheek story, to some a satire, to others a light-hearted homage.

"I think that people who read this will see it for what it is, not a world issues-changing, Eisner-winning drama but two blokes having a laugh and inviting you into the joke," the writer added.

Lee explained the series is set shortly after The Gloom – who carries two silver, ivory-handled automatics given him by the Angel of Vengeance – has made his first appearance on the streets of Manhattan. "Neither of the guns have a trigger, they don't need bullets – when aimed and fired at the guilty, the scales on the side of the gun will judge whether the target is guilty or not and if found guilty the gun will fire hellfire at the target, judging them."

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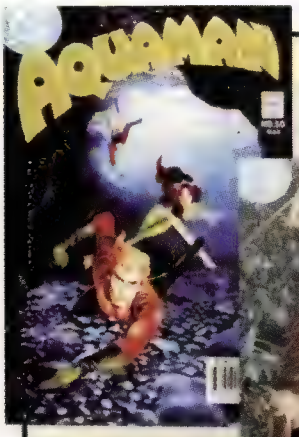

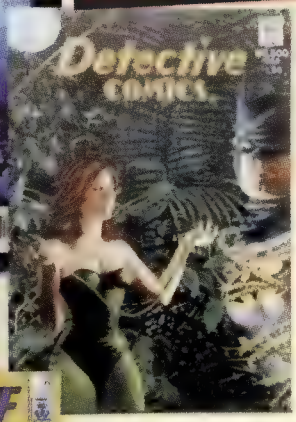

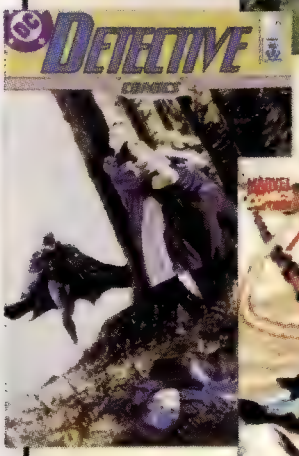

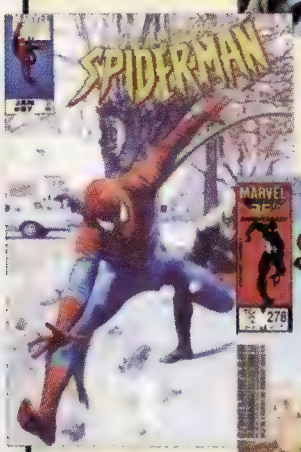

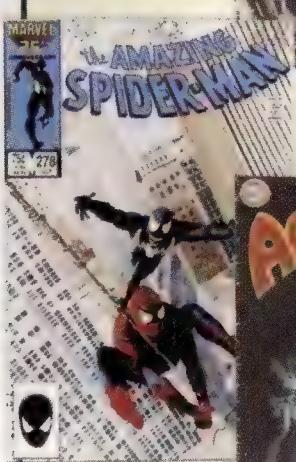

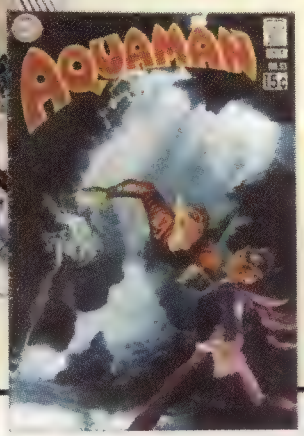

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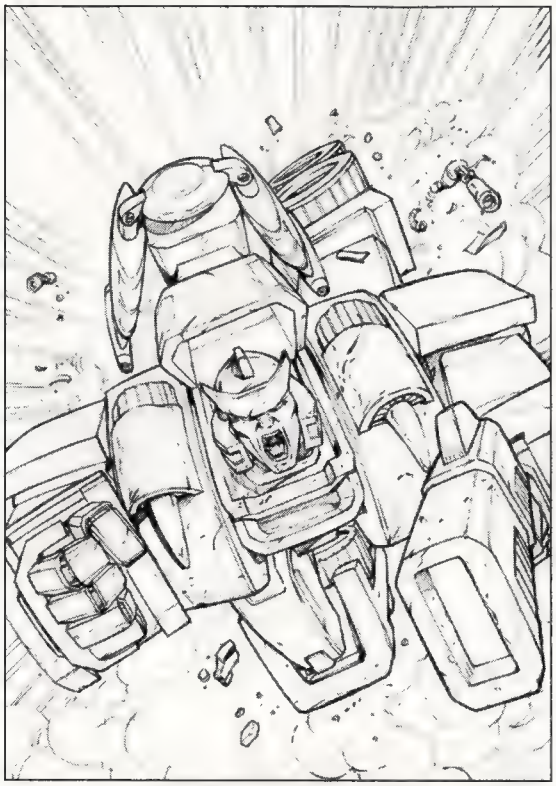
DreamWave no more



TITAN is to launch a five-volume series of manga/digest format paperbacks collecting strips from Marvel UK's black and white ***Transformers*** *comic. Kicking off in May with* ***Aspects of Evil*** *– which reprints the serial from issues #223-227 together with stories from #235-236, 240, 245-247 and 251-254 – this latest addition to the London-based publisher's list features stories written by Simon Furman and drawn by Andrew Wildman* [see art above], *Geoff Senior, Jeff Anderson and Simon Coleby.*

THE LATEST casualty of changing market conditions is the Canadian publisher of **Transformers**.

Set up by brothers Pat and Roger Lee in 1996, DreamWave initially published under the Image umbrella. It became a separate entity in 2001 and met huge success the following year when it launched its line of titles based on the Hasbro action figures dubbed "robots in disguise".

Early issues of the copany's **Transformers** comics were hugely successful, with initial sales close to 120,000. But more recently they have dropped to less than 30,000 per issue. While still popular by US comics standards, the license is said to be extremely expensive. Coupled with DreamWave's inability to get its non-Hasbro licensed titles out on time – which rarely achieve anything like the success of its action figure tie-ins, the massive costs have conspired to bring about the company's downfall.

In recent months Pat Lee has taken to working for Marvel, drawing covers and latterly pencilling the five-issue **X-Men/Fantastic Four** series written by Akira Yoshida.

As reasons for shutting DreamWave, Lee cited the shrinking comics market combined with a weak US dollar and unsustainable monetary commitments that have ultimately proven to be too financially taxing.

● Rumours have been circulating for some time that Hasbro has been looking to move **Transformers** to Devil's Due, its **G.I. Joe** licensee.

THE ALIEN symbiote introduced by idiosyncratic British writer Peter Milligan and artist Clayton Crain in 2004's ***Venom vs Carnage*** *is to get the Marvel spotlight in his own six-parter. Written by Milligan and pencilled by* ***Wolverine****'s Darick Robertson,* ***Toxin*** *features a different super-villain each issue as the creature's human host tries to do some good in the wake of a major jail break happening concurrently in* ***New Avengers****. Shipping on April 13, the first issue of the $2.99 series features cover art by Esad Ribic* [above].

Byrne revives Demon

H-E-R-O writer Will Pfeiffer is to team up with John Byrne to reinstate a character created by Jack Kirby for DC in 1972.

Blood of the Demon is being pencilled and plotted by Byrne – currently also writing and drawing DC's latest **Doom Patrol** series – and dialogued by Pfeiffer, who said that the demonic Etrigan is not an all-out demon in this series, "at least not most of the time but he's not always benevolent either.

"He treads that line between good and evil, which is always interesting," Pfeiffer added. "The part we're concerned with is, for the most part, good, but he could be lured back over that line any time. The tone is being set by John, but I will say that it is dark, violent and spooky – but also fast-paced with a big dose of action."

He concluded, "This isn't one of those characters who mopes around for 22 pages each month."

Above: John Byrne art for ***Blood of the Demon****, a $2.50 series that premieres from DC on March 9.*

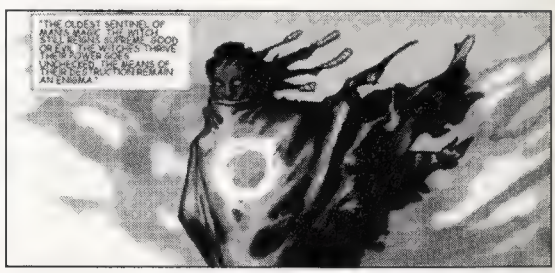


Image lands world's most ruthless witch

A RELATIVE newcomer, Paul Harmon is looking to tell of the life and times of the most powerful and ruthless witch in history.

Harmon, whose major publishing credit to date is a contribution to Dark Horse's 2004 anthology, **Strip Search**, describes his Image series, **Mora**, as being in the spirit of **Alice in Wonderland** and the works of Roald Dahl.

According to the writer/artist, his bimonthly black and white comic *[see art above]* is "a dark fairy tale about a girl, Mora, who will not only become a very powerful witch, she becomes the ultimate witch, albeit a very ruthless one.

"It chronicles her life and the events that gradually change her into the very dangerous creature she will become. All the while the story explores different aspects of human nature and Mother Nature all through the world of fantasy. There will be a ton of strange creatures and animals throughout the series," he said.

"And," he added, "for those who say 'Witches aren't really my thing,' pretend you don't know what a witch is and check out the story. It's not like anything you might expect."

"My witches are in a world of magic creatures and they are on the top of the food chain," continued Harmon, who says his target audience is young adults and older. "They are these antique creatures from a time when man and nature were more closely related, and that has a lot to do with the nature of the witches' power."

Mora *#1, priced $2.95, ships on February 2.*

In Brief

ALAN Grant and Frank Quitely are guests at The Glasgow Comic & Card Mart being held on Saturday, February 5.

Organisers and dealers at the event are planning to raise money to aid victims of the catastrophic tidal waves that devastated parts of Asia.

Show organiser Ivor Davis said, "Ever since the enormity of the tragedy became apparent I felt very strongly that we should do whatever we can to aid the ongoing appeal. A third of the admission money will go to the DEC Appeal Fund and we are planning other fundraising activities on the day."

Further details can be obtained by telephoning 0141-630 0049 or by logging on to www.redhotcomics.demon.co.uk

SUCH has been the success of **Identity Crisis** that DC is going back to print on all seven issues of the Brad Meltzer/Rags Morales/Michael Bair mini.

The latest editions – the fourth for issue #1, the third for issue #2 and the second for #3-7 – are scheduled for April.

With a hardcover collection due in September, no further printings are planned.

SET IN motion by the mass jail break currently being chronicled in **New Avengers**, the new Marvel $2.99 five-parter **Spider-Man: Breakout** follows the webslinger track down some of the escapees.

It is written by CrossGen refugee Tony (**Exiles**) Bedard and pencilled by **Avengers**' Manuel Garcia. The first issue ships on April 20.

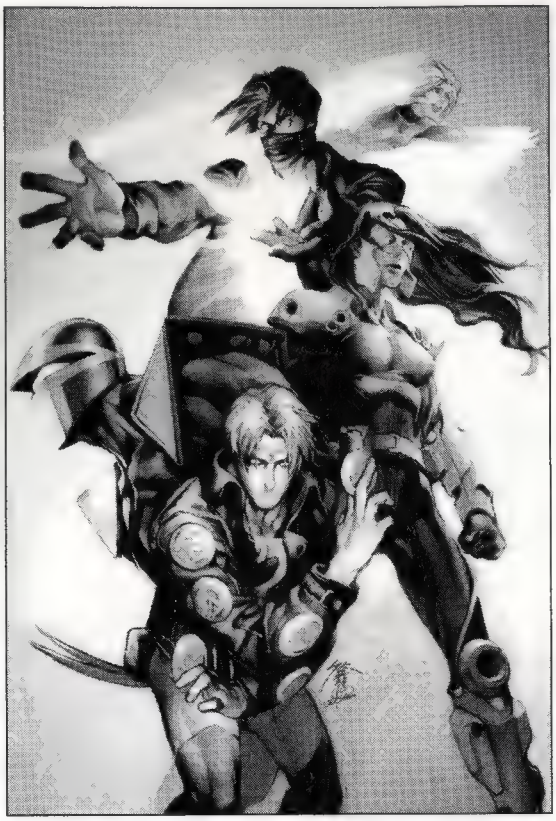
DARK Horse has a **Nexus** reprint title in the pipeline.

Announcing the plans for the series he and writer Mike Baron began in 1982 at the short-lived Capital Comics, artist Steve Rude said, "**Nexus** is coming back in the form of a rather large trade paperback from Dark Horse, in November. This time, they will be starting from the very beginning – about time – by reprinting the very first **Nexus** book; the oversized, black and white magazine from Capital."

FRED Van Lente and former **Supergirl** artist Leonard Kirk have been chosen as the new creative team for the next arc of **Amazing Fantasy**.

The series, which resumes publication under the *Marvel Next* umbrella in April with #7, is to introduce a new Scorpion, this time a female version.

"This Scorpion has no previous ties to any existing Marvel character that we know of, yet," claimed Van Lente, who wrote **The Silencers** for Moonstone. "She'll make her debut in #7 and is scheduled to continue until #12 with an edge-of-your-seat story arc that gets to the bottom of most of this character's mysterious past"



*EXCELSIOR is to become more than just Stan Lee's sign off when. from April 4, a team of that name debuts in the third $2.99 issue of Marvel's soon-to-be-relaunched **Runaways**. Joan Chen's cover art* [above] *for the comic – which is written by Brian K Vaughan and pencilled by Adrian Alphona – features five of the new group's six members. "Longtime Marvel fans may recognize the Slingers' Ricochet, who's standing in front of the New Warriors' Turbo and Darkhawk. Power Pack's Julie Power is flying behind my beloved Chamber of Generation X fame. And there's one more secret member of Excelsior not pictured here – and no, it's not Daredevil," Vaughan explained.*

Frank Kelly Freas 1922-2004

FRANK Kelly Freas died on January 2 at his Los Angeles home of natural causes. He was 84.

Born on August. 27, 1922 in Hornell, New York, Freas [pronounced freece] demonstrated artistic talent at an early age. In the late 1930s, he attended the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, which awarded him a Doctor of Arts degree in 2003.

Serving in the Pacific theatre during World War II in photo reconnaissance, he passed his spare time painting beautiful women on the noses of bomber aeroplanes. After the war ended, he began a career as a commercial illustrator but soon moved on to science fiction and fantasy work.

Cited as the artist who defined the look of pulp SF, his paintings and illustrations graced the covers and interiors of such magazines as **Weird Tales**, **Planet Stories** and **Analog** and stories by writers including Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein and Arthur C Clarke among many others.

The winner of 11 Hugo Awards for Best Professional Artist, in 1957 he began working for **MAD Magazine**, where he contributed strips as well as being regular cover artist from 1958-62.

*Above: Frank Kelly Freas's rarely seen version of **MAD Magazine** mascot Alfred E Neuman from the cover to the first [1962] edition of **The MAD Frontier**.*

In 2000, Freas, who was still working up to his death, was elected a Fellow of the International Association of Astronomical Artists.

He is survived by his second wife and by two children from his first marriage as well as by six grandchildren.

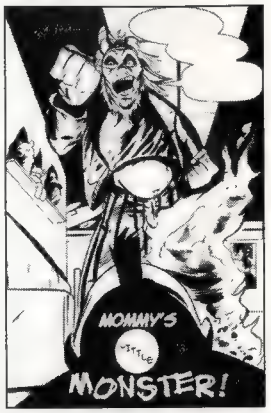
Hero Camp moves to Image

A PROPERTY that started out in 2004 as a self-published mini comic is to get a high profile boost this May when it is relaunched as an Image Comics title.

Created by writer Greg Thompson and artist Robbi Rodriguez, who published three issues under their Atomic Chimp Enterprises label, **Hero Camp** is described as a lively look at teenage self-discovery and superheroes.

The series' focus is Eric, a normal teen who just happens to be the offspring of the world's most popular superheroes.

His parents send him to Camp Enokchuk to discover and hone his so far unrealised superpowers. Eric's family and fellow campers – who include the flame-throwing Hottie; Tex, an invincible cowpoke with a magical lasso; Dina Mite, a super strong spitfire and member of the legendary Mite family of superheroes; and Hype, a super speedster with an invisible girlfriend – refuse



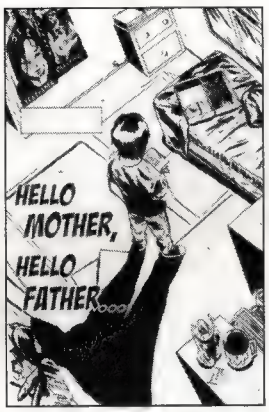
to believe he is powerless, so in addition to normal teenage anxieties like girls and grades, he must also worry about surviving daily camp life.

"I think most people have felt like an outsider at some point in their lives," states Thompson. "The choice we've all had to make is whether or not to let that define who we are. Eric may not have superpowers, but he's a bright, resourceful kid who always manages to maintain the upper hand. Everyone loves an underdog and Eric is definitely that."

To add to Eric's troubles, a trio of villains believe he is the key to destroying Camp Enokchuk and wiping out a cadre of future foes.

"Originally, there weren't going to be any prototypical baddies in the stories," explained Thompson. "But a friend of mine convinced me that if you're going to do a superhero book, you gotta have bad guys.

"Well," he said, "it's a book about a summer camp, so the logical bad guys are those that we've all used to scare each other as we sat around a campfire swapping horror stories. I'm speaking of the Goatman, Hookman and Bloody Mary."



Pictured are interior pages from issues #1 [above] *and #2* [top] *of the **Hero Camp** mini comic; art by Robbi Rodriguez.*

CI #179 competition winners

IN **CI** #179, 10 readers were each offered the opportunity to each win copies of both Columbia Tristar's *Hellboy* and *The Punisher* movies on either DVD or video. The winners were:

Andy Brown, Trowell, Nottingham
Bill Collins, New Invention, Willenhall
Mr Dean Kensett, Mileoak, East Sussex
Mrs F Kitson, Basingstoke, Hampshire
Fernando Lanpetti, Fano, Italy
Chris Nicolls, Crawley, West Sussex
Russell C. Parke, Greenwich, London
C J Patel, Eltham, London
Robert Todd, Middlesbrough, Clevenland
Bruce Vernon, Bath, Avon

Reader votes scored the 10 most popular sections of the issue as:

1 News International (19.8%)
2 Reviews (13.1%)
3 Letters/Comic Cuts (7.3%)
4 New Roundup (6.7%)
5 Frame to Frame (6.6%)
6 Biff's Illuminations (6.5%)
7 NetWorks (6.2%)
8 Advance Listings (5.6%)
9 In the Gutter (5.3%)
10 Competition (4.8%)

Obviously News Roundup was a worthwhile addition, but Letters at 3rd and Biff at 6th?! The highest scoring section as the least popular feature was "None, they're all fine" – amazing at 31.5%, with Comics Economics second at 12.3% and Talking Shop tying third with Directory at 8.3%.

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Book Report

MARVEL is hoping to turn the general public on to its superheroes with a host of licensed titles.

It is to planning a major assault on the mainstream book market via licensing agreements it has entered into with four of the world's leading publishing houses: DK Publishing, Harper Collins, Meredith Books and Simon & Schuster's Pocket Books.

Bruno Maglione, president, Marvel International stated, "Mass market trade publishing has been under-served of Marvel products to date. There are a variety of publishing formats we identified as natural fits for our character franchises and the audiences they attract. In each case, we have teamed up with a specialist leader imprint in the field who has the capability and market knowledge to address these commercial opportunities rapidly, and with the support of long-term publishing strategies."

For his part, Tim Rothwell, Marvel Enterprises' president – Worldwide Consumer Media Group commented, "The foundation of the Marvel legacy is in the richness of our characters and our storytelling established through our core Marvel Comics division. The publishing marketplace, therefore, remains one of the most important and impactful avenues to capture new and existing fans and keep them immersed in our character base."

DK Publishing is to develop an extensive line of children's and all-age nonfiction titles as part of its **Ultimate Guides** series. Initial additions to the lines will spotlight Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, Iron Man, the X-Men and the Avengers.

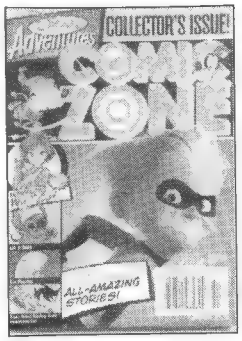
For its part, HarperCollins is to publish movie tie-ins with several titles already in the pipeline based on the forthcoming *Fantastic Four* (premiering this summer), *X-Men 3* (May 2006) and *Spider-Man 3* (May 2007). Products will target children aged 5-12 and include junior novelisations, picture story books, chapter books and manga story books in addition to colouring and activity titles.

Pocket Books is to launch a series of adult paperback novels starring such heroes as Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, X-Men, Wolverine and The Ultimates while Meredith Books is to develop and publish a portfolio of children's book products ranging from sound storybooks and colouring books to picture storybooks.

These are to feature not only the obvious Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, Incredible Hulk, X-Men, Iron Man, Captain America et al but also *Spider-Man & Friends*, which is aimed at the pre-school market.

... news round up... news round up... news round up... news round

More Comic Zone from Disney



DISNEY is upping the frequency of its 96-page **Disney Adventures Comic Zone** digest to quarterly.

The anthology, with sales well above the average 1.2 million each issue of its standard **Disney Adventures** comic, features over a dozen strips including *W.I.T.C.H., The Incredibles, Super Robot Monkey Team Hyperforce Go*.

Adding to speculation that Disney may be making a move back into comicbooks, Hyperion Books, a Disney Publishing subsidiary that recently acquired CrossGen's assets and is developing a line of children's novels based on J M DeMatteis and Mike Ploog's **Abadazad**, is also planning to publish manga. It has acquired the rights to Misako Takashima's **Ride On!**. Unlikely to be published before 2006, the graphic novel is being published first in America rather than in Japan as is the case with preexisting licensed Japanese material.

Strangehaven #17 on horizon

With the 10th anniversary of his acclaimed self-published title looming, Gary Spencer Millidge finally has a new issue of his **Strangehaven** in the pipeline.

Coming nine months after #16, the black and white #17 is to ship from Abiogenesis Press in time to premiere at the UK Web & Mini Comix Thing 2005, which takes place on Saturday, March 19 at the Great Hall, Mile End, London.

iBooks lands Ultimate Harvey

IBOOKS has inked a deal to publish new graphic novels and electronic books based on the Harvey Comics characters, Casper, Richie Rich and Hot Stuff, which are now owned by Classic Media.

Harvey editor Sid Jacobson will serve as consulting editor for the line which is to consist of 176-page, 7x10" trade paperbacks priced at $14.95. Library hardcover and Spanish language editions are also planned.

It worked for Marvel, so the first release, this autumn, is tentatively titled **The Ultimate Casper**. Mark Millar will not be its author.

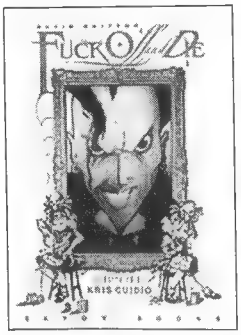
Japan from the inside

JAPAN Journeys is offering to give manga and anime fans an insider's view of Japan – company owner James Greenfield having lived there for several years before setting up his central London-based company.

The tour operator's Budget Manga Tour 2005 runs from March 29 to April 5, coinciding with the Tokyo International Animation Fair. It encompasses Tokyo's subways, night life and pop culture as well as visits to the Ghibli Museum.

For further details on the tour, telephone 0207-437 5453 or log on to www.japanjourneys.co.uk

Savoy creators' farewell



SAVOY Books' provocatively-titled **Fuck Off and Die** is being touted as probably writer David Britton and artist Kris Guido's farewell volume of comic strips.

A follow up to the controversial **Adventures of Meng & Ecker**, the 160-page trade paperback features stories of not only Meng and Ecker but also Lord Horror, La Squab and several new characters. A mixture of black and white and colour strips, the 12x8½" volume goes on sale in February. A cover price has yet to be announced.

No more Bloodhound

DC IS to cancel **Bloodhound** with the $2.99 issue #10, which ships on April 13.

The series was drawn by Leonard Kirk and Robin Riggs and written by Dan Jolley, who chose the announcement of its cancellation as the opportunity to make known his decision to quit his other regular DC title, **Firestorm**. His final issue is to be #13, which ships in May.

Jolley's replacement on the series is to be Dark Horse's **Lone** writer, Stuart Moore. A former Vertigo and Marvel Knights editor, he joins series penciller Jamal Igle on the $2.50 #14, and said, "Firestorm's kind of like a modernised, more powerful Spider-Man; his alter ego, Jason Rusch, is a young guy just learning how to get by in the world. There's a lot you can do with a character like that."

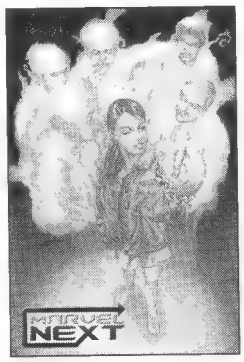
A first taste of Vertigo

DESIGNED as a bargain-priced introduction to its mature readers imprint, DC's $4.99 **Vertigo: First Taste** is a 160-page trade paperback reprinting single issues of six Vertigo series.

On offer in the sampler are **100 Bullets** #1 [written by Brian Azzarello with art by Eduardo Risso], **The Books of Magic: Life during Wartime** [Neil Gaiman and Si Spencer with Dean Ormston], **Death: The High Cost of Living** [Gaiman with Chris Bachalo and Mark Buckingham], **Saga of the Swamp Thing** #21 [Alan Moore with Steve Bissette and John Totleben], **Transmetropolitan** #1 [Warren Ellis with Darick Robertson and Jerome K Moore] and **Y: The Last Man** [Brian K Vaughan with Pia Guerra and José Marzan Jr].

The compilation ships on April 6.

Spellbinding battle at Marvel Next



2000 AD's *Carver Hale* team of Mike Carey and artist Mike Perkins are reuniting on **Spellbinders**, a *Marvel Next* six-parter that focuses on a teenage girl who moves from Chicago to Salem only to discover her new hometown is a battleground for rival factions of witches and non-witches.

With both groups trying to get her on their side, the 15-year-old Kim Vesco also has to contend with an unseen enemy that is out to kill her. To maker matters worse, she has not got a clue as to why.

The $2.99 series is set to launch on March 23.

Little Books of Horror

IDW IS launching a hardcover series of adaptations of classic horror tales.

Its **Little Book of Horror** series kicks off in March with **30 Days of Night** writer Steve Niles' retelling of Mary Shelley's **Frankenstein**. Each of the 48-pager's spreads feature prose excerpts accompanied by a painting by Scott Morse. To follow this first $15.99 volume is a version of

... people in the news ... people

DULY noted: Gilbert (**Freak Brothers**) Shelton's favourite cartoonist is now officially the UK's top comics name.

Leo Baxendale, creator of such comics classics as *The Bash Street Kids* and *Grimley Feendish* is the first industry worthy to feature in the £140 annual 2500 page hardback **Who's Who**. Much to his amusement, they published his answer to "recreation": Seeping into the woodwork and rotting it.

AQUAMAN penciller Patrick Gleason has signed an exclusive two-year contract with DC as has Al Barrionuevo, who pencils **Batman: Gotham Knights**.

At Marvel, **Ultimate Spider-Man** penciller Mark Bagley has extended his exclusive while Tom Grummett, who pencils **New Thunderbolts**, has signed exclusively with Marvel for the first time.

Both contracts run for undisclosed periods.

Another Marvel signing is Jae Lee, exclusive for three years.

The artist – whose recent credits include **Hulk & Thing: Hard Knocks** and **G.I. Joe/Transformers** –

round up... news round up... news round up... news round up.....

up... news round up... news round up... news round up... news

Bram Stoker's **Dracula**. "Remember those old Cliff's Notes from school," asked IDW editor-in-chief Chris Ryall (to which all UK readers will be answering "No!"). "Well, consider the **Little Book of Horror** series as beautifully illustrated, well-written and scary versions of those old primers. Everything you'll need to know about classic horror books and movies will be presented on the pages of these little hardcovers."

The Spirit meets the Escapist

ONE OF the last projects the recently-deceased Will Eisner worked on is to be a meeting between his signature character, The Spirit, and the hero created by author Michael Chabon for his Pultizer Prize-winning **The Adventures of Kavalier and Clay**.

Discussing working on the story with Eisner, Alex Saviuk said, "In late October, Will called me and asked me if I would be interested in giving him a hand on a short but important project he was currently involved in with Dark Horse Comics. Without asking any further questions at all, I eagerly said – 'Yes'."

"Will would supply me with thumbnail roughs," the artist explained. "I would do fairly tight pencils on the DH artboards he supplied and then he would work his magic – finishing the work in ink and washtones after making any necessary preliminary changes whether stylistic or compositional. In his customary generous way, he also explained that this would be a good way to introduce me and my work to the editors at Dark Horse since I wasn't working in the mainstream in any capacity and this could act as a showcase for what I can do."

The story is to appear in the $8.95 issue #6 of **The Escapist**, an 80-pager, which ships from Dark Horse on April 13.

Buckaroo Banzai at Moonstone

FINALLY, 21 years after *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai in the Eighth Dimension* hit the screen, Moonstone is looking to feature the cult movie adventurer and his misfit band of heroes in a series of new stories.

Kicking off later this year with a four-parter, the latest adventures are to be written by his creator Earl Mac Rauch – who also scripted the movie – with input from the film's director W D Richter.

The first mini – which has no connection with the announced but never written *Buckaroo Banzai vs The World Crime League* – is being drawn by Stephen Thompson, who has contributed to Dark Horse's **Star Wars** comics.

The Witching axed

DC IS cancelling **The Witching**. Written by Jonathan Vankin, the

in the news... people in the

was working on a DC six-parter, **Batman: Jeckyll and Hyde**, when he signed with Marvel. DC has now given Sean Phillips the last three issues.

"I wanted to finish it. In fact, my Marvel contract allows me to finish it but DC was unhappy with the progress I had made on **Batman** when it was announced I was working for Marvel again," explained Lee.

"Freelancing is a tough business as you constantly have to line up work months ahead of time based on estimates of when you think you'll be done with something. If anything happens in your life that slows your progress down, it screws everything up. When it's for the same company, it's usually not a big deal. When it's for two different companies, it sucks."

MARVEL has hired editor Mark Paniccia away from TokyoPop.

He joins Marvel as senior editor of new development with responsibility for both new properties and for a new generation of comic book writers and artists.

Already responsible for editing **Amazing Fantasy**, he is now also to spearhead development of original graphic novels.

$2.99 Vertigo series ends on March 30 with #10, which is drawn by Liverpool's Leigh Gallagher and Dan Green.

Mountain comes to Mohammed

SAN Francisco's Bay Area is to be the new home to Image Comics, which has moved there from its Orange, California base.

The change of address follows Jim Valentino's replacement as publisher by Erik Larsen. A Bay Area resident, the **Savage Dragon** creator was unwilling to relocate to Orange. Sometimes, it seems, the mountain does come to Mohammed.

Complete Calvin and Hobbes

ANDREWS McMeel is planning to collect every single one of Bill Watterson's syndicated *Calvin and Hobbes* strips in a slipcased set.

Scheduled for release this autumn, **The Complete Calvin and Hobbes** consists of three hardcover volumes. The complete set is to retail for $150.

24 Hour Comics All Stars

SCOTT McCloud, Dave Sim, Scott Morse and Paul Smith are just some of the contributors to About Comics' **24 Hour Comics All Stars**.

A collection of strips produced since McCloud created the 24 Hour Comic concept with *A Day's Work*, which is included, the 240-page anthology also features work by Sean McKeever and Tone Rodriguez among others. Published in black and white, the $12.95 volume is in the 5½x7¾" format.

"We're releasing this book in April to put it on the shelves in time for 24 Hour Comics Day 2005, which is April 23rd," explained Nat Gertler, About Comics publisher and founder of 24 Hour Comics Day. "Our hope is that people will read this book and be inspired to create their own 24 hour comics."

Further information on 24 Hour Comics Day and 24 Hour Comics can be found at www.24HourComics.com

Endsong goes back to print

MARVEL is going back to press on the first issue of its **X-Men: Phoenix – Endsong** six-parter.

The second printing of the comic written by Greg Park and pencilled by Greg Land ships on January 26, at the same time as the second issue of the $2.99 mini. The new edition features a new Land-drawn cover depicting Jean Grey in her green costume.

Legendary warrior enters Speakeasy

SET IN present day Manhattan, **Crimson** writer Brian Augustyn's **Beowulf** tells of the arrival of the world-shattering threat the legendary warrior now known as Wulf has waited 1,400 years to combat.

Premiering in April, the $2.99 Speakeasy series is illustrated by the singularly-named Dub, a member of Canada's Grafiksismik collective.

Ernie and Smiley return

ALONG with every other Chaos! Comics property (other than Lady Death) acquired by online retailer Tales of Wonder from the Arizona-based publisher's bankruptcy auction, Evil Ernie *[left]* and Smiley the Psychotic Button are to resurface at Devil's Due.

In July, the murderous duo are joining forces with Cassie and Vlad, Tim Seeley's girl/monster team, in the first issue of **Hack/Slash: The Final Revenge of Evil Ernie**.

"The idea for teaming Cassie and Vlad with someone like Evil Ernie had been there since the inception of the characters," Seeley announced. "Basically I've been making up slashers that are in the mould of these famous movie slashers, so sooner or later, I definitely wanted to put Cassie and Vlad against some of the actual archetypes. Evil Ernie is really *the* comic book slasher character... no other horror/slasher character reigned in comics as long as Ernesto... so he was a natural place to start."

news round up... news round up... news round up... news round

Manga launches

As traditionally published in Japan, all manga titles are in a 5¼x6" digest format, in black and white and read from right to left unless otherwise stated.

AMERICA'S sole remaining publisher of manga in the comicbook format, Dark Horse, is to promote one of its colour Japanese titles with a bargain-priced one-shot.

Priced 25¢, the right-to-left reading 24-pager ships on February 16, just one week before the 152-page second volume of the $14.95 **Trigun Anime Manga** series it launches on January 26. The colour comic, which is subtitled **Wolfwood**, spotlights one of the anime-based manga's two major characters.

CHANGES are afoot at ComicsOne where an associate company, DrMaster is take over the stock and continue its manga line.

Speaking on behalf of ComicsOne, Shawn Sanders told **CI** that the company, which is to run independent of DrMaster, hopes to continue its line of Hong Kong kung fu or manhua titles.

VIZ IS planning to launch a **Full Metal Alchemist** manga series in June.

The San Francisco-based publisher also has a Shonen Jump Advanced line set to debut in April. Aimed at older teens and young adults, the first title is to be **Hunter X Hunter**.

Also in the pipeline from Viz is **Dr Slump**. The series, by **Dragon Ball** creator Akira Toriyama, begins in May.

COMING from Central Park Media in March are two new manhwa series, both retailing for $9.99.

Kung Fu Jungle Boy by Jae Kyung Uhm and Choong Ho Lee tells of a boy and his friends who must defend their home from the diabolical, dastardly and flatulent Lord Kojak. ("Who toes you, baby!")

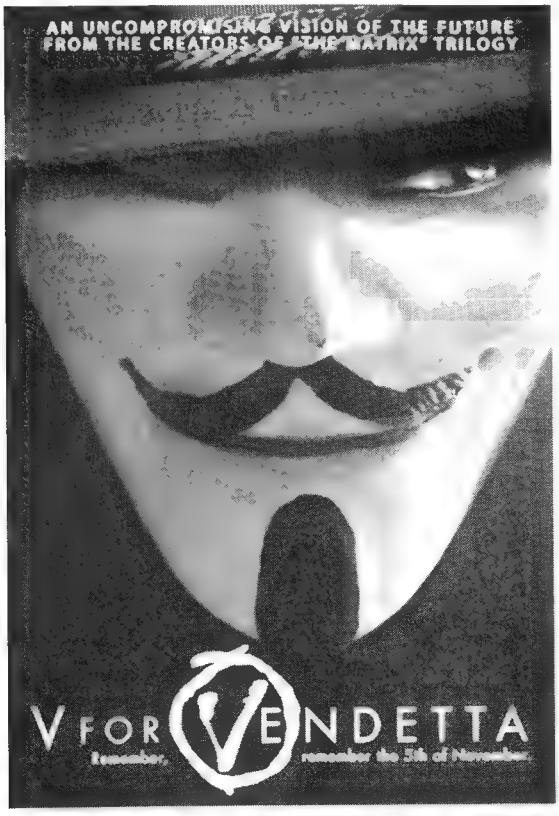
Sook Ji Hwang's **Angel Shop** is the story of a boy pretending to be the robot created by the girl he pines after.

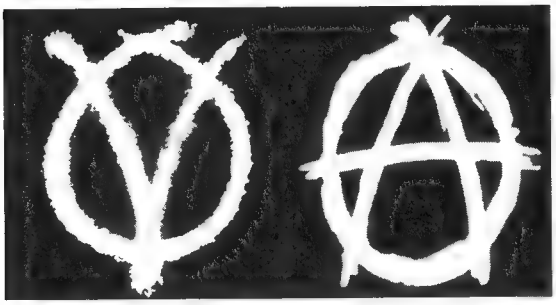
In March CPM is also expanding its *Be Beautiful* yaoi line with **Target in the Finder**. The first volume of Ayano Yamane's **Finder**, it retails at $15.99.

Yaoi is an acronym of "yama nashi, ochi nashi, imi nashi" which translates as "no mountain (i.e. peak; climax), no point, no meaning.

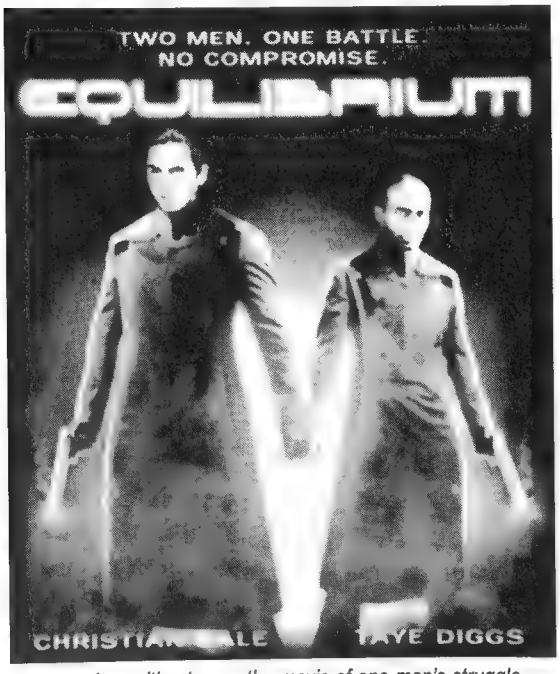
Basically there is no attempt at plot or meaning or character development; the point is sex, and the relationship outside the yaoi doesn't matter.

The term is used in the broad sense for any male/male stories.





Top: The teaser poster for the forthcoming Warner Bros movie. So what's with the dodgy V plus E in a circle (which looks metallic in colour)? Bodes badly as an early indication of attention to – or caring about – detail, given that probably everybody on this side of the Atlantic realises that the graffiti V sign is almost an inverted version of the classic Anarchy symbol.



While you're waiting to see the movie of one man's struggle against a futuristic totalitarian state, you might want to check out the similar storyline in Kurt Wimmer's Christian (Batman Begins) *Bale-starring black and white movie,* Equilibrium (2002).

Remember, remember

Catalyst of the character's comicbook creation, Dez Skinn looks at the

WE ALWAYS hoped it would end up as a BBC play.

As *V for Vendetta* began to shape up with its marginally futuristic backdrop and London setting, it was almost a deliberate move to keep special effects to a minimum and to use existing London landmarks. This was not only to ground the Thatcher-era timed outcry against political extremes, but also to make it an inexpensive proposition for television production.

That Norsefire – a fascistic ruling party – is being replaced by Nazis having won World War II in the forthcoming Hollywood movie adaptation is perhaps as much a comment on the potential audience as on the film-makers. But more worrying is Warner's co-producer Joel Silver, being quoted everywhere as saying about his *Matrix*-making co-producers, "With *V For Vendetta*, the Wachowski Brothers have created an uncompromising vision of the future driven by a totally original superhero."

The only quote in the Warner Bros press release to undermine his comment is "originally collected by DC Comics as a ten-part series" – itself either another historical rewrite or doubletalk (originally collected?).

Rebranding the lead as a superhero may be more acceptable than suggesting the Wachowskis are making a pro-terrorism movie, given that V succeeds where his visual identity of Guy Fawkes failed – by blowing up the Houses of Parliament within the opening scenes of the story.

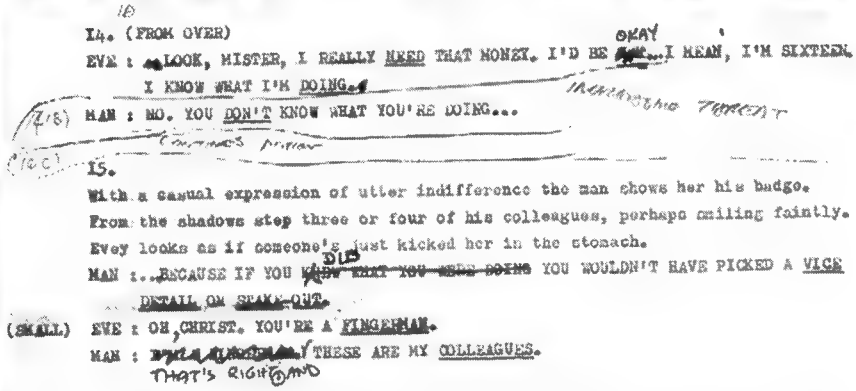
When the film was originally announced, in November last year, it was to have a 2007 release date but now, with filming set to begin this March in Berlin, the opening has been moved considerably forward.

While the irony of its intended

YOU...YOU RESCUED ME! LIKE IN A STORY! I DON'T BELIEVE IT.
WH-WHO ARE YOU?
ME? I'M THE KING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. I'M THE BOGEYMAN. THE VILLAIN.
...THE BLACK SHEEP OF THE FAMILY.

Above: From **Warrior** *#1, Evey's first meeting with the enigmatic and melodramatic anarchist, when V rescues her from the Fingermen.*

I...I'VE GOT A JOB & HUM-TIONS, BUT THE MONEY IS YOU KNOW, IT ISN'T ENOUGH. LOOK MISTER, I REALLY NEED THAT MONEY. I'D BE OK I MEAN, I'M SIXTEEN. I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.
NO, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
...BECAUSE IF YOU DID YOU WOULDN'T HAVE PICKED A VICE DETAIL ON STAKE-OUT.
OH CHRIST. YOU'RE A FINGERMAN.
THAT'S RIGHT AND THESE ARE MY COLLEAGUES.



14. (FROM OVER)
EVE : LOOK, MISTER, I REALLY NEED THAT MONEY. I'D BE OKAY...I MEAN, I'M SIXTEEN. I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.
MAN : NO. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING...

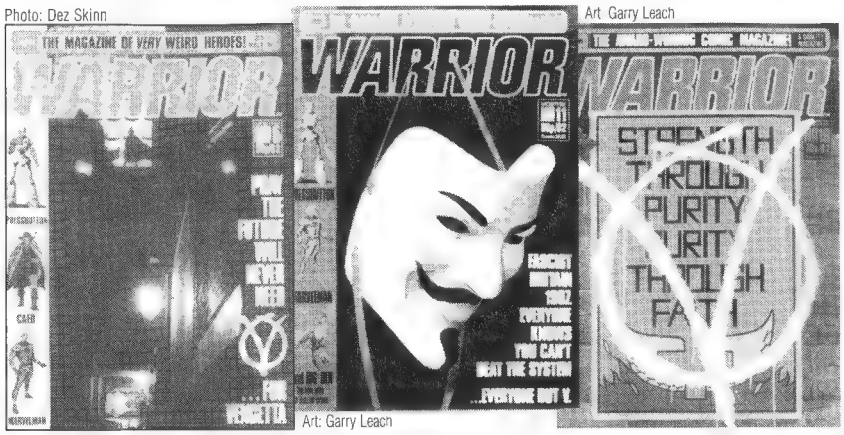
15.
With a casual expression of utter indifference the man shows her his badge.
From the shadows step three or four of his colleagues, perhaps smiling faintly.
Evey looks as if someone's just kicked her in the stomach.
MAN : ...BECAUSE IF YOU DID YOU WOULDN'T HAVE PICKED A VICE DETAIL ON STAKE-OUT.
(SMALL) EVE : OH, CHRIST. YOU'RE A FINGERMAN.
MAN : THAT'S RIGHT AND THESE ARE MY COLLEAGUES.

Writers and artists often find editors' niggling, cajoling and interfering little more than a necessary evil. But no such irritation usually exists between the two main parties in comics creation, probably because of their more apparent interdependence, as – with few exceptions – neither could function without the other. In V for Vendetta, *while editor Dez Skinn sometimes tightened Alan Moore's copy and made corrections, artist David Lloyd enhanced the story's pacing with additional frames. In the above story and art detail from episode one, he added two split second narrow frames, increasing the tension as the Fingerman reaches inside his coat. Moore's typed request for him to have "a casual expression of utter indifference" may have been too tall an order for any artist, but Lloyd placed equal demands on Moore, refusing to include any such comics cliches as thought balloons or sound effects anywhere in the entire serial. Lloyd also pushed himself, choosing to avoid drawing any outlines around objects or speech balloons.*

the fifth of November...

story behind a new Hollywood hero who blows up government buildings

Photo: Dez Skinn



Art: Garry Leach

Despite now being a major Hollywood project, V for Vendetta only appeared on the cover of three issues of its birthplace magazine (issues 5, 11 and 19), none of them being David Lloyd artwork.

US premiere will probably be lost on the bulk of its audience, the teaser poster is etching the date on people's

Star Wars Episodes I to III's *Natalie (Padmé Skywalker) Portman. Not your average 16-year old naive London girl, but cast as Evey,* V for Vendetta's *female lead.*

minds by utilising the first line of the Guy Fawkes Gunpower plot nursery rhyme, "Remember remember the fifth of November".

For those unfamiliar with the story, which Moore now accepts as "riddled with logical and factual inaccuracies", we learn that England narrowly missed nuclear destruction in a global war. In the panic, the government was replaced by a totalitarian regime, reminiscent of Nazi Germany. Ethnic, racial and sexual "deviants" were then sent to camps to be executed, or experimented upon.

Little about V was ever revealed, except him being a survivor of these camps, who set out to destroy those who brought about such misery. Like in the Judge Dredd strip, his face was never revealed. But here this was because he was the everyman figure, symbolic of a country reacting against its totalitarian overlords. His identity was irrevelent.

Herein lies probably the biggest problem facing the Wachowski brothers. Because the lead of the movie is never seen – should they remain faithful to the original story – how to cast the role of V? As Dredd, Sylvester Stallone took less than 20 minutes to annoy purists by showing his (unscarred) face.

With V, perhaps a Darth Vader to-the-extreme route is best. Like Orsen Welles' *Shadow* plays for radio, the voice here is all-important. Crucial to such an extreme that a unique marketing ploy could be used. While it would make it tough for any actor to take the role, if it is never announced who is behind V's mask, the movie would in this respect totally reflect the original story.

Above: Detail from #1 of the US reprint's cover where David Lloyd finally got the chance to produce cover art when the series was picked up by DC Comics and coloured to suit their comicbook format.

While V would never wear a chest symbol, his precursor – an enigmatic vigilante who never revealed his face – displayed a familiar V shape in a circle. David Lloyd's Night-Raven for Dez's **Hulk Comic** *#1, Marvel UK (1979).*

Despite worries from fans, concerned about whether this will bomb like *Tank Girl*, rather than do a *Spider-Man*, the Wachowskis – like Spidey director Sam Raimi – are hardened comics fans. Not only did they borrow concepts from **The Invisibles** in their *Matrix* storyline, but Larry Wachowski actually wrote for Marvel in the early 1990s.

With their full support, the director on this is their first assistant director on the *Matrix* trilogy, James McTeigue, last seen as first assistant director on *Star Wars: Episode III*.

● *Personally, I'm hoping they get it right. Given the cost of* **Warrior**, *after years of small option fees it will be nice to get the part royalty for coming up with the name (as a twist on Churchill's V for Victory thus providing the author with a root for the whole V structure) plus commissioning Lloyd and Moore to produce it and editing/publishing the story in the first place!*

QUATERMASS? I'VE JUST REMEMBERED THE NAME, HE'S THE ROCKET FELLOW... HEY WHAT'S UP? SOMEONE HI-JACKED A ROCKET?
NOT NOW, JIMMY... WE'RE BUSY!

"A good hat artist"

V for Vendetta artist/co-creator David Lloyd proves persistence and patience pay off

I'D BEEN aware of David Lloyd's art long before commissioning him to produce comic strips.

He'd first surfaced producing visuals for the British Fantasy Society, illustrating fiction and features on classic fantasy/horror writers. But, while I was producing **House of Hammer**, there was one overriding requirement beyond the quality of the work when looking for artists to adapt X-rated Christopher Lee/Peter Cushing movies into comics – an irresistable lure for the magazine's under 18 audience – drawing likenesses.

McMahon nixed

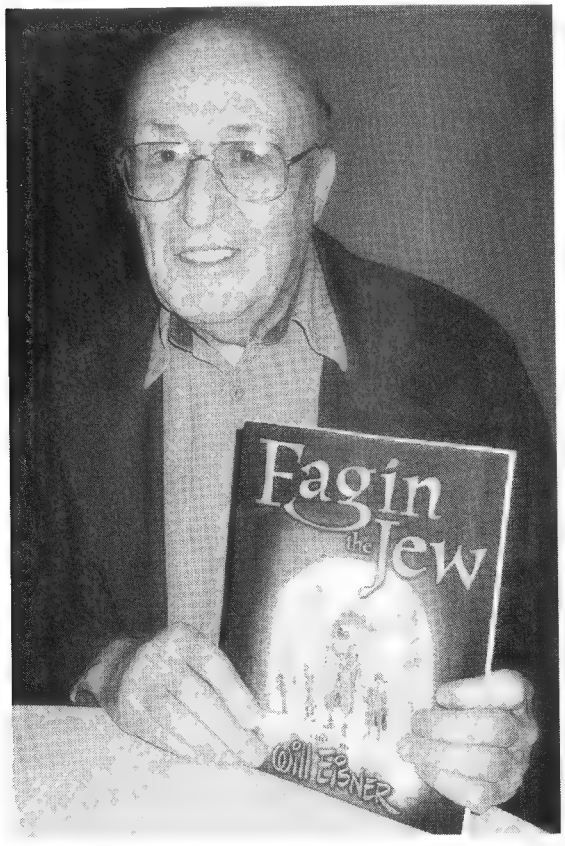
One of the most revered of the early Judge Dredd artists, Mike McMahon, was initially brought up to see me as a possible. A Dave Gibbons local find, then-teenaged McMahon showed great potential, but it wasn't in drawing likenesses. Launched at the same time as IPC Magazines' **2000 AD**, **House of Hammer** offered possibly the only independent outlet for comics artists, so competition was tough.

David Lloyd, obviously a keen fan of the horror genre, soon began submitting samples of his work, seemingly on a regular monthly basis. Receiving little response did not deter him, new samples would regularly arrive, like clockwork.

What this showed, other than his obvious ability, was traits he is now well-known for, his patience, tolerance and ability to deliver. One-off samples of art may often look impressive, but give no indication how long they took to produce.

Almost above quality, an editor has to know how quickly an artist can deliver. David delivered, so as soon as something suiting him came up, his style was remembered and he was commissioned to adapt *Quatermass II – Enemy from Space* as the first of many projects we were to work together on. *Dez Skinn*

NIGHT-RAVEN
NOW WE'LL SEE WHO THIS CREEP REALLY
DON'T BELIEVE IT
GRANACCI!
ARE YOU THINKIN' WHAT I'M THINKIN'?
DOWNSTAIRS FAST!
MEANWHILE
WHAT'S TAKIN' THOSE TWO SO LONG? I'M GETTIN' OUTTA HERE!
NO! WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
RAVEN EXTENDS HIS HAND...
AAAAAH!
OKAY FREEZE!
CRASH!
WE'RE TOO LATE... H-HE'S BEEN BRANDED!
HE'S OUT OF HIS HEAD... WRECKED...
WHAT'S THAT? PINNED TO HIS COAT?
WHERE BROODING DARKNESS SPREADS ITS EVIL WINGS THE NIGHT RAVEN STINGS!
NIGHT TIME IN THE CITY



Will Eisner: May His Spirit Live On

Comics pioneer Will Eisner died on January 3rd, aged 87. Alan Woollcombe offers a look back at the life of an industry visionary

CRICKET commentator John Arlott pitched it best: "good players contribute to the game, great players change its direction."

By that yardstick, Will Eisner was one of the greatest comics visionaries who ever lived. Yet Eisner, who died on January 3rd at the age of 87 from complications following heart surgery, did not invent a world-famous superhero or head a publishing empire. His principal accomplishment was far more elemental: arguably more than any other individual, he made comics literate.

He transformed the comics medium, or in his terminology *sequential art,* from being regarded as "about two stages above pornography" into a legitimate literary art form, recognized as being able to tell stories of any stripe to any age group. This he did by constantly innovating both the format and visual language, and by always looking to the future. Today, his innovations are part of the *lingua franca* of comics.

From the start, Eisner was both entrepreneur and artist, although he himself admitted in a 1960s interview that "business acumen comes from hunger". The son of an immigrant Jewish stage painter from Vienna, he grew up in Depression-era New York and went to DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx district, a setting he was later to use in many of his graphic novels.

He secured his first paid art job while still at school, and his closest friend was Bob Kane, future co-creator of Batman. In 1935 he studied anatomy and drawing at the New York Art Students' League under the legendary Canadian painter, George Bridgman.

From there, he moved on to copywriting at Hearst's **New York American** newspaper, being a magazine art director and working in a local print shop, while submitting illustrations to pulp magazines on the side.

The pulps, however, were losing out to a new craze, comics, and Eisner saw his first paid comic strip, *Captain Scott Dalton*, published the following year in a short-lived periodical called **Wow – What a Magazine!**, which folded shortly afterwards.

In 1937 Eisner persuaded its erstwhile editor, S. M. "Jerry" Iger, to go into partnership with him to package new work for comics magazines, which he foresaw would soon run out of newspaper strips to reprint. The Eisner & Iger Art Syndication Company, the second comic art *'shop* (short for sweatshop) was a huge success, producing 20 strips a week for the main comics publishers, including Fiction House, Fox and Quality. Pressure of work meant the studio had to hire extra artists, including Kane, Jack Kirby, Bob Powell, Mort Meskin and Lou Fine, with Eisner himself, under various pseudonyms, writing and drawing strips including *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*, *Blackhawk* and *Dollman*.

> ***"I wanted to write better things than super-heroes. Comicbooks were a ghetto."***
> *...Will Eisner on creating The Spirit*

In 1939, the wunderkind was headhunted by Everett 'Busy' Arnold of the Quality Comics Group to come up with a Sunday newspaper supplement for them. It was the break he was waiting for: "They wanted me to make a comic book for newspapers," he recounted in an interview for **The Jack Kirby Collector**. "They gave me an adult audience and I wanted to write better things than superheroes. Comic books were a ghetto. I sold my part of the enterprise to my associate and then began **The Spirit**. They wanted an heroic character, a costumed character. They asked me if he'd have a costume, and I put a mask on him and said, 'Yes, he has a costume!'"

In reality, as he put it, "**The Spirit** was nothing but a series of short stories. They were the pulps in visual form." The Spirit was the alias of Denny Colt, a "criminologist and private detective," who lacked any kind of superpower, wore no costume (just a standard issue blue suit and hat – plus a Lone Rangerish mask) and lived in an underground hideout in Wildwood Cemetery with his black sidekick, Ebony White.

The real stars of the show, however, were the compelling narratives and Eisner's stunning and experimental art. Drawing inspiration from Fritz Lang's and Orson Welles' cinematic film noir realism, his artistic inventiveness knew no bounds: new storytelling devices abounded, panels could be any shape, the lettering was an integral part of the imaginative layouts and the masthead was changed every week – for 12 years!

Imbued with a tongue-in-cheek sensibility, the stories were even more wildly innovative, by turns surreal, expressionistic and parodic. The gumshoe hero served more as an identity for the strip and was often relegated walk-ons, overshadowed by plot, concepts and many gorgeous women after his hide.

The **Spirit Section** was launched on June 2nd 1940, and was an instant smash with a largely adult audience, being syndicated at its peak to 19 papers and, with a print run of five million, one of the highest circulated comicbooks ever. *The Spirit* occupied eight (later seven) of the 16 pages in the supplement, the rest being given over to two other Eisner creations, *Lady Luck* and *Mr Mystic*.

Eisner was the mainstay: although he was ably assisted by the likes of Lou Fine,

THERE IS NO ESCAPE...
I'M ALL ALONE IN A BIG HOUSE... THE OLD MANSION LEFT TO ME BY UNCLE EDEN...
AND I'M TERROR STRICKEN!
ABOVE THE NOISE OF MY THUMPING HEART LOUDER THAN THE SOUND OF MY GASPS.. ARE THE FOOTSTEPS OF MY COUSIN... AS HE FOLLOWS ME ABOUT THE HOUSE...
WAITING...
...WAITING FOR ME TO FAINT OR SLEEP SO HE CAN KILL ME!!
BUT I MUST STAY AWAKE UNTIL THE SPIRIT COMES... UNTIL THE SPIRIT COMES TO SAVE ME...
SPIRIT
By Will Eisner

Original Will Eisner art can be purchased online from www.deniskitchen.com/Merchant2/merchant.mv

Jules Feiffer, Wally Wood and Tex Blaisdell, when he was called up into the US Army, the strip suffered, losing much of its wit and inventiveness. His return after his discharge saw his signature strip reinvigorated, with his post-war ones in particular being seen in retrospect as classics.

Intermittently reprinted ever since, all 645 strips are being reissued in 24 hardback volumes as **The Spirit Archives** by DC Comics.

He was in uniform from May 1942 till late 1945. Stationed for most of that time in Washington at the Pentagon, Warrant Officer Eisner pioneered the use of cartoons in instructional manuals for preventative maintenance, creating the dumb klutz Joe Dope for **Army Motors** for the purpose.

His fresh, witty approach to getting across hard information was much appreciated by the troops, used to dull-as-ditchwater, technical prose. "Instead of 'Remove the detritus from the vehicle,' we'd write 'Get the crud off your jeep,'" he would later explain. His artistic and editorial talents were also used to produce **Firepower** magazine, along with numerous motivational posters and illustrations.

The immediate post-war years saw him achieve renewed success with **The Spirit**, but his entrepreneurial streak wasn't satisfied with just one strip, no matter how successful. He came up with new, self-published ones, such as *John Law* and *Nubbin the Shoeshine Boy*, but they flopped in the downturn in comics sales in the post-war years. Even **The Spirit** itself wasn't immune to the cold blast of competition from middle America's new love, television, and he retired the character on 5 October 1952, leaving the field of commercial comics entirely.

Fortunately, he had spotted another market: training manuals. Convinced from his wartime experiences that cartoons were an excellent educational tool, he founded the American Visuals Corporation in 1948 to capitalise on it. In June 1951, impressed by his wartime work on **Army Motors**, the Army contracted Eisner to produce **P*S, The Preventive Maintenance Monthly,** once again starring the bumbling Joe Dope, which he was to do until handing over the contract to Murphy Anderson in the late 1960s.

Over the next 20 years, he was to earn a comfortable crust supplying numerous cartoon-based manuals and magazines to businesses and schools.

The tail end of the 1960s and the rise of the radical underground comics showed Eisner that a new generation of comics creators were "doing with this medium what I always believed I could do. They were doing literature – protest literature, but literature." Eisner's response catalysed the industry: a quartet of interrelated New York-based short stories in one volume published in 1978, **A Contract With God and Other Tenement Stories**. It proved a landmark in different ways.

For starters, it was very obviously a proper book, from a non-comics publisher. Arguments have raged for many a year in America about what to label illustrated stories in book form. Eisner has been lauded as the godfather of the graphic novel, yet **A Contract with God** was not the first American graphic novel, but if he was not the first in print, he did more to popularise the concept of the graphic novel than anyone.

> ***"Doing with this medium what I always believed I could do... literature."***
> *...Will Eisner on underground comix*

The format freed him from the constraints of newspaper strips and comic magazines to tell the real-world stories he wanted to tell in the way that he wanted to tell them.

A Contract with God, published when he was 61, was the first of nearly 20 ambitious graphic novels addressing important, social issues and aimed at adults. Eisner himself summarised them best: "My stories are all centred around the human being, the business of survival, of struggling against the forces of life itself. My interest is not the superhero, but the little man who struggles to survive in the city."

In many of these tales his immigrant Jewish background proved a deep well from which he drew time and again: **A Contract with God** itself is centred around a New York tenement building in the 1930s, with the protagonist of the title story, Frimme Hersh, a Jewish slum landlord in the Bronx.

In **To the Heart of the Storm**, Eisner recounts a young conscript's childhood poverty and encounters with anti-Semitism. His 2003 book, **Fagin the Jew**, reconceives Charles Dickens' **Oliver Twist** from the villain's viewpoint, while his final work, **The Plot: The Secret Story of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion**, due out in May, is a controversial exposé of the infamous anti-Semitic propaganda hoax.

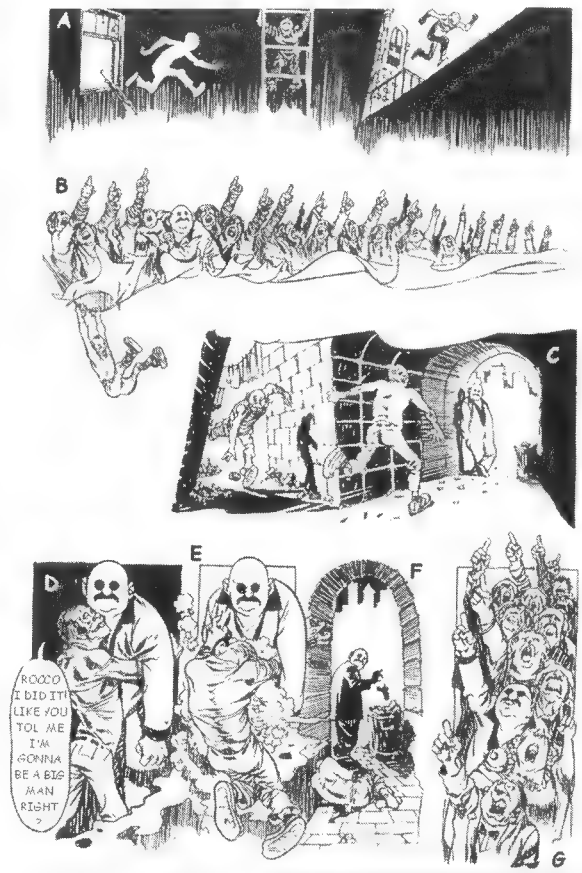
Eisner summed it up in an interview with the **Miami Herald** in 2003: "Remember that Judaism is very rich in stories, and storytelling is a very big part of our culture." Described by Paul Levitz, President of DC Comics, as the 'cartoonist laureate' of the Jewish immigrant experience, the National Federation for Jewish Culture awarded him its second-ever Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002.

Eisner's writings were not confined to works of fiction, however. In 1972 he was asked to teach cartooning at the New York School of Visual Arts, a position he was to hold for 17 years, and for which he coined the term *sequential art*. Growing out of that, he wrote two highly regarded instructional books on the subject: **Comic and Sequential Art** (1985) and **Graphic Storytelling** (1996).

An increasingly popular and respected figure at conventions, he won plaudits both inside and beyond the comics industry. In 1995 he was the recipient of the Milton Caniff Lifetime Achievement Award and in 1998 the Reuben Award for cartoonist of the year from the National Cartoonists Society.

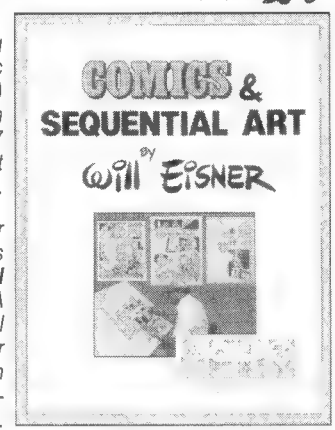
Perhaps the ultimate accolade, however, was that from 1988 the top award the industry has to offer was named after him. And yes, he won some of those as well.

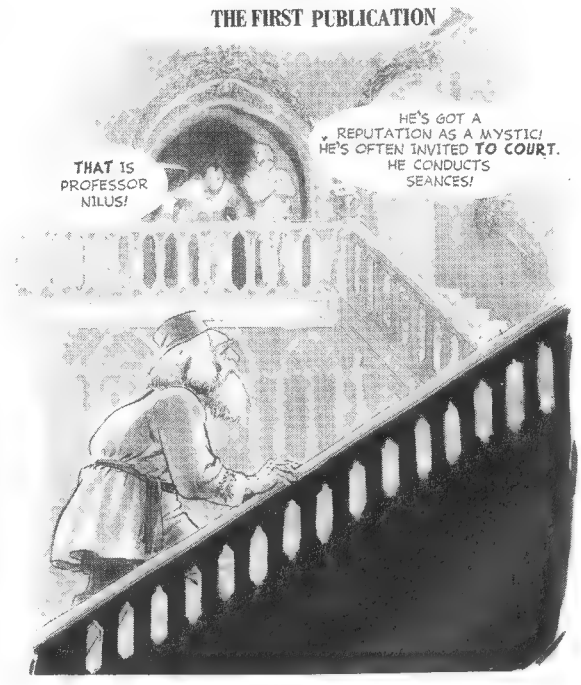
***William Erwin Eisner**, comics writer and artist: born Brooklyn, New York 6 March 1917; died Lauderdale Lakes, Florida 3 January 2005. He is survived by his wife, Ann Louise Weingarten Eisner, and his son, John. His daughter Alice died of cancer in 1969.*



Eisner across the decades. **Facing page:** *attending the Raptus comic convention in 2003 (top) and the wonderful spash page from May 11, 1947 for his syndicated Spirit newspaper strip section.*

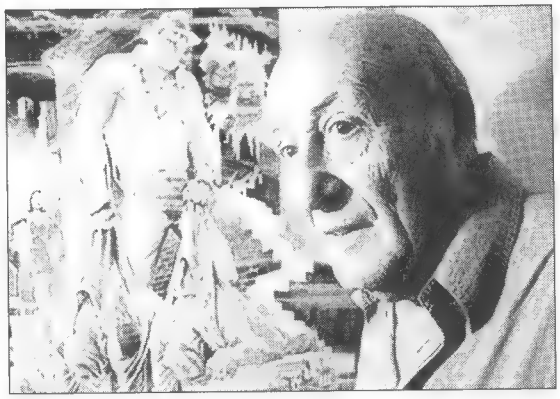
This page: *An interior (top) and cover for his* ***Comics & Sequential Art*** *(2000). Below: A page from Eisner's final work,* ***The Plot****, for release this May from W.W. Norton, with a foreword by Umberto Eco.*




1905
RUSSIA
THE FIRST PUBLICATION
THAT IS PROFESSOR NILUS!
HE'S GOT A REPUTATION AS A MYSTIC! HE'S OFTEN INVITED TO COURT. HE CONDUCTS SEANCES!

Professionals pay tribute to

*Following Will Eisner's death, professionals from across the industry responded to **CI**'s call to pay their respects to the comicbook pioneer*



Brian Augustyn

Writer: **Crimson**

It's going to be said over and over again – and deserves to be: Will Eisner was the most important creator the comic book industry has seen. To us, Eisner is Orson Welles, John Ford, Frank Capra, Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorcese and more, all in one package.

From the dawn of the arftform, he pushed it to be better; pioneering storytelling techniques that are still the industry standard, experimenting always with new ways to use comics and staying fresh for 70 years.

Will Eisner was and is an artistic giant and one of my few heroes. I'll miss the man and his work.

Frank Brunner

Artist: **Doctor Strange**

Will Eisner will always be a source of inspiration for me, and a mystery.... How could one man do so much quality work both drawing and writing and not have burned himself out long ago? I'd like a quaff from that gene pool please.

John Byrne

Writer/artist: **Doom Patrol**

There are simply no words to adequately express the contributions made by Will Eisner in his lifetime, or the loss to the medium brought by his death. He was a colossus in a land of pygmies.

Max Allan Collins

Writer: **The Road to Perdition**

Of the giants of comics only Will Eisner represents the entire breadth of the field. He created superhero comics; he had a major syndicated feature; he pioneered educational comics; and he is rightly credited as the creator of the graphic novel.

In addition, he was a master of the form, a phenomenal artist with a grasp of design, characterisation and storytelling second to none; and a fine writer who could do more in eight pages than most do in 80.

Finally, he was kind. Sure, he was a tough businessman; but he always had time for upcoming writers and artists. I love having known him almost as much as having read him. And I will cherish his laughter when, presenting an Eisner award a few years ago at the San Diego con, I commented, "The only thing worse than being nominated for an Eisner when Will Eisner is up for it, is to be Will Eisner... and lose the Eisner!" But I don't believe he ever did lose.

In a way that says it all – he lived to compete for an award of excellence... named for himself.

Mike Deodato Jr

Artist: **Amazing Spider-Man**

Whether it was creating the klik klik klik of a femme fatale's high heels across a wooden floor, the dramatic shadow across an oozing sewer or the suit-and-raincoat-clad hero with hat, mask, gloves but no socks, Will Eisner was the master of his craft from whom all of us took at least some of our inspiration.

Although much of his finest work appeared in a *Spirit* section of a Sunday newspaper that most of us are too young to have seen when first published, we have thrilled to the reprints since the days of the Kitchen Sink 'underground' editions until today's magnificent **DC Archives**.

Particularly with his return from World War II, his work shows skill and technique few have consistently exhibited before or since. Every seven-page story could teach something about pacing, compressing time, body language, expression, mood, action, drama, humour. He may never have directed movies, but it sure felt like he did. His work lives on and so do his Eisner Awards – symbols of excellence for creators down in the trenches.

Will Eisner was a teacher, all right, and his stories and pages will just keep on teaching.

Colleen Doran

Artist: **Orbiter**

I would love to write something more important, but all I can say was that he was a good and decent man. I can't think of anything better to say about anyone.

Dave Elliott

Publisher: Atomeka

Please leave the Spirit alone. Don't let any one get soft and sentimental and start doing Spirit stories in memory of the man. His stories already do that. Please also don't do any 'tribute' books like DC did with Julie Schwartz, Will Eisner's work speaks far better for itself than anybody else's can.

Have two minutes silence and then read your favourite Eisner book. Remember this creative genius as the gentleman and creator he was. His kindness and thoughtfulness paralleled his talents. His books will live on to show what this industry can achieve when talent is given freedom.

> ***"Genius" doesn't suffice.***
> *...Joe Quesada*
> *editor-in-chief, Marvel*

Steve Englehart

Writer: **Detective Comics**

When comics were huge, a person coming into the field felt the need to encompass its history – to learn about the grandmasters of the past. And the grandest of all was Eisner. You might know about Fawcett or Fred Ray or some other aspect of the past but if you don't know about Eisner you just don't know Comics.

A personal story: When I was in the Army, I was stationed at Aberdeen Proving Ground. The bound volumes of the APG news-paper had a complete set of Will Eisner's **Male Call**, which I xeroxed and passed among my friends – this was well before the Eisner reprint craze took hold. Since I knew about him but had seen only the occasional one-off reprint in, say, **The Great Comic Book Heroes**, finding that run was literally like finding buried treasure.

Mike Grell

Creator: **Jon Sable, Freelance**

The comic industry has lost one of its founding fathers, a man who inspired and entertained generations.

Will Eisner was a master storyteller who's characters were the kind of folks you'd recognise in the street. He turned the ordinary into the extraordinary with the touch of a pen.

The Spirit was more than a superb comic section, each episode was a brilliantly crafted morality play. The Runyonesque cast of characters both dark and humorous foreshadowed the denizens of what is now unquestionably one of the greatest achievements in the history of comic art, **A Contract with God**.

Will showed us all how. He was the point man, exploring new territory for the rest of us to follow. His **Comics & Sequential Art** and **Graphic Storytelling** remain the handbooks for comic artists. His work will continue to inspire new generations of storytellers, to challenge us to explore new methods, break the rules, push the boundaries. Lucky for us.

Legends are made in the telling... Will Eisner's is told in ink.

Paul Gulacy

Artist: **Master of Kung Fu**

I never had met Will Eisner until last year at the San Diego Comicon. One day I was waiting for a cab in front of the Westgate Hotel and who comes strolling with his wife out of the front doors but Will. I grabbed his arm and said "Hello" and introduced myself.

We chatted a short time about the weather, great restaurants and the huge crowd attending. Before he walked away he said to me, "Keep on doing it, man."

I'll never forget that. I figure if Will Eisner suggests that I keep drawing comics, I had better take the advice.

Scott Hampton

Artist: **Sandman Presents/Lucifer**

In the history of our medium, no one has had a greater impact or been a more stalwart ambassador and defender than Will Eisner.

And no one ever did better

Mike Allred

Creator: **Madman**

Will Eisner was the first legend I ever met. He was a wonderful and truly great man. Like Charles Schulz and Jack Kirby – other major influences in my life, you'd be hard pressed to ever find anyone who could say anything bad about them and you'd find a limitless number of people who would happily sing their praises. That's cause for celebration. A life well lived.

Yes, he was one the greatest pioneers in the storytelling biz and his influence is priceless. But, for me personally, he set an example on how to be a gentleman that I still strive for today.

In 1989, we were living in Ramstein, Germany where I covered human interest stories for AFRTS television in Europe. We – Laura and I – had driven up to Frankfurt where the *Comic Book Confidential* movie was being shown. Will was making an appearance to promote it. We got to the comic shop early, where Will was to do a signing and saw a terrific poster there for the film with several illustrations of comicbook characters to coincide with the creators featured in the film.

In a jumble of German and English I asked about how I could get one of the posters and we were sent to the theatre where the film would be playing. We had lots of time before the signing so we set out to try and get a poster.

When we got to the theatre we banged on the glass doors and someone opened up to see what we wanted. Again mixing German and English and lots of hand gesturing towards a displayed poster, the man finally smiled, nodded and escorted us in. When we rounded a corner we were shocked to see Will and his wife twiddling their thumbs waiting to be taken somewhere – anywhere. The man who let us in must have thought we were there to see Will.

When we introduced ourselves the Eisners shot to their feet and seemed as thrilled to see us as us them – possibly the comfort of hearing unbroken English. We had a terrific uninterrupted conversation that went on for quite awhile until they had to leave for the signing.

In that time I was able to show Will my first comicbook work, **Dead Air**, which I was finishing up at that time. I, of course, thought it was brilliant and was proud to show it to him.

Will then gave me the most brutally kind critique I've ever had, before or since. I saw my work with new eyes. And somehow I wasn't devastated but encouraged. I've since seen everything I do as a step on a path. My work would never be perfect or adored by everyone. If it pleased me to do the work to strive to improve then it wasn't work – and if anyone other than me got something from my efforts, that was a blessing.

Looking at **Dead Air** now would cause me to shrivel up with embarrassment if I wasn't assured that 'you have to start somewhere.' And ever since that wonderful first meet – I still cherish the picture of us on that day – Will always watched and reflected on my progress when we would see him at various shows.

He would always promise me a Madman drawing, even if I didn't bring it up, but it never happened. I like to imagine what it would have looked like if he'd ever gotten around to it. Who knows, maybe he's working on it right now.

There's no tragedy in a life well lived and so I don't grieve for his passing. I'm sure his wife, family and close friends are in terrible pain and sadness with their loss. He touched many lives – what a blessing that is – and we will all miss him until we see him again. And I know that we will.

In the meantime, he left so much art, so many stories to be enjoyed, inspired by, and to learn from.

Will Eisner

comics than him. Probably never will.

Phil Hester

Artist: **Green Arrow**

I could go on forever about what Mr Eisner means to our artform but anything I could stammer out would be redundant and an understatement. Instead I'll tell my only Eisner story through the glow of fond memory.

My career began in the black and white '80s explosion. I was attending my very first San Diego Con as a pro and was completely starstruck. I stood within 10 feet of Jack Kirby but could not screw up the courage to even say hello, same with Will Eisner. Instead I simply went to every panel they spoke on and tried to absorb as much as I could.

At one roundtable discussion, the comics intelligentsia began to decry the glut of crappy comicbooks flooding the market, claiming that the swell of bad books was drowning the struggling good ones. They wanted to do away with all the amateurish rags clogging up the shelves. Rags to which I had contributed. It was heartbreaking.

Mr Eisner quietly made the point that maybe those on the panel ought not to judge these new cartoonists too harshly. That this new generation was under more scrutiny than any before and someday soon these creators would probably be collaborators with many on the panel. In essence it was a gentle, graceful, noble, astute smackdown. At this point Will's halo just about blinded me.

After the panel I retired to the restroom. Eisner arrived at the urinal next to mine. I froze. I'd concluded my business already but kept my station. Only one year into the business and I'm peeing right next to Will Eisner. He turned to his pal who had the next urinal over and asked, "Gee, you think I was too hard on those guys"? It was all I could do to keep from hugging him.

Harriet P McDougal and Robert Jordan

Best-selling fantasy author

Will Eisner was a great gentleman as well as an enormously original and influential creator. I first met him in Tempo Books' offices – think **Kavalier and Clay** – in the early 1970s, when we worked together on a little project called **The Spirit Casebook**. I last saw him in San Diego last summer, when he broke into a lope through the crowded meeting room to bound up on the stage. His style and grace were the same. A wonderful figure has left us.

John Morrow

TwoMorrows Publications

What can you say about someone who was as influential on the comics industry as Will Eisner? His graphic novels are ground-breaking, his books on creating sequential art are deep and hugely informative and the most prestigious awards the industry presents are deservedly named after him. He was there at the beginning of the industry, and anyone who's seen him in the last decade thought so vital an individual must be 20-30 years younger than he actually was.

Right to the end, he was constantly producing work that rivalled or surpassed material he'd produced in his younger days. He was an amazing creative force.

In my few dealings with him, I always found him to be incredibly respectful of the medium he so profoundly influenced and a delight to work with. I'll miss seeing his new work every year but I'll savour the wealth of material he left for us.

Mike Avon Oeming

Artist: **Powers**

For me, there were three essential pillars of comic art who all my direct influences came from – Alex Toth, Jack Kirby and Will Eisner.

Eisner was a major force in creating the modern language of comics, maybe more than anyone else. More importantly, he was a wonderful human being who lived a long and wonderful life.

Byron Preiss

Publisher: iBooks

Will Eisner was one of my oldest friends in comics. He used to play tennis in Westchester with my Uncle Freddy Preiss. Will was always friendly, always willing to offer advice and direction. He was a gentleman.

We met at his office on Park Avenue South while he was producing **PS Magazine** in the '70s. He had no reason to agree to meet with me but was open and nice.

Thereafter, my friend and publisher Norman Goldfind began working with Will on some nonfiction books and Will brought him **A Contract with God**. I was impressed.

It was a serious, adult comics work in long-form. I had been struggling with my own **Fiction Illustrated** series of long-form comics at Norman's old company Pyramid Books and was in the middle of packaging **The Illustrated Roger Zelazny** for Norman's new company, Baronet, in 1978.

Last summer I watched him stand during long stretches at the Eisner Awards and inside I was yelling, "Give that man a chair!" Secretly, I knew Will had it in him to do all that standing. We'd had lunch together earlier in the con and he bounded around like a teenager full of enthusiasm for his next work. I thought if anybody lives to be 100, it will be him.

He was the best and always will be. I will miss his mahogany voice on the other end of the phone.

Jim Shooter

Former Marvel editor-in-chief

Will Eisner was good and kind to me when that was not fashionable. He was always glad to see me no matter what the fanzines and fatheads were saying about me at the time. He had been unjustly vilified more than once during his long career, so he saw right through the nonsense.

We were friends. We had many long talks about the business and life in general. Though he was 34 years older than me, we had a great deal in common in terms of experiences in the business, the never ending battle for truth, justice and distribution, fatheads, etcetera. Will always made me feel that 'this, too, shall pass away,' no matter how bad 'this' was. "Press on," he said. I did.

Wise, thoughtful, brilliant, insightful – what a man. What a loss for all of us his death is. It is only polite to mention that he was a genius, but you already knew that.

Jim Valentino

Former Image Comics publisher

A genuine giant in our field. His work was an inspiration to me – I don't know how many copies of **Comics & Sequential Art** I've given away over the years. If you haven't read it or **Graphic Storytelling** yet, do so... now. As a person I always found him kind, warm and generous. It is a very sad day, indeed.

To his family and his friends, my deepest and most heartfelt condolences. To his fans; let us celebrate his life and his achievements. Let us honour his memory by doing our best to live up to his ideals, his aspirations for our medium and to emulate the way he conducted himself like a gentleman, always having time and a kind word of encouragement for all.

And, in that, as well as in the works he left for us, Will Eisner will be immortal. As he deserves to be.

Mark Wheatley

Creator: **Frankenstein Mobster**

It is hard to think of any other creator with the same far reaching impact on the comicbook industry. But so much of Will Eisner stays with us.

I only knew Will to say hello to at conventions. But his work has been an intimate companion for my entire professional career. I've been inspired by his art, his storytelling, his designs.

And by paying attention to how he plotted his course from one new project to the next, I've taken lessons from him in creator ownership and control, business plans and so much more. We all see him as the master comicbook creator – but he was only able to be that because of his mastering of business. His work will remain. His work is a school.

Bill Willingham

Writer: **Fables**

Will Eisner was a talented cartoonist, a leader in creating the comics industry and a man of generous spirit. I will always be honoured to have met him, however briefly.

Marv Wolfman

Writer: **Crisis on Infinite Earths**

Will's career in comics began before Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster created Superman and his brilliance kept shining right to his death. Will's work which was brilliant back in the '40s, remains brilliant today.

Look at the **DC Archives** being published now and you will see an artist whose work proudly stands after six decades. In fact, his story telling and innovative concepts have yet to be equalled, let alone surpassed. Beyond his art, I knew Will as a wonderful man. I spent time with him and his lovely wife Ann in Scotland at a convention where we three Americans hung out together most of the time, probably because we couldn't understand a word the Scots were saying... and they were speaking in English.

Will's friendship meant a lot to me. He was and remains an inspiration.

Dean Motter

Creator: **Terminal City**

I was lucky enough to have a few conversations with Will Eisner over the years, at first as an aspirant and later as an associate. The most important thing I learned from him – and which, thankfully, in his books he was able to commit to posterity and progeny alike – was the simple and obvious importance of craftsmanship. Not so much in the illustrative disciplines – in which he was expert – but in the very telling of a story.

His is a McLuhan-esque 'The Medium is the Message' career if ever there was one.

Will's reputation is not based on a single work. He never produced a watershed volume such as **Maus**, **Dark Knight** or **Watchmen**. The beloved Spirit never achieved the cultural impact of Superman, Popeye or Spider-Man. Yet few historians would contest the fact that he was the most influential, articulate, if not most important, comics artist in the history of the medium. For me his most memorable story, if there can be one, the tale of Gerhard Schnobble was memorable simply because it combined, in a mere eight pages, the best of all his formidable talents and passions – qualities on display throughout his gigantic oeuvre.

Will taught us by example. He talked the talk. He walked the walk.

In an era when artistic shortcomings are excused as stylistic idiosyncrasy or obscured by digital ornamentation, his work continues to exemplify that of an earnest and tireless artisan. Like Runyon or Wodehouse he did not need to re-invent his idiom to make it his own. Like his peers Alex Raymond, Walt Kelly and Al Capp his brush and ink work was careful and practiced without being overworked. He was so 'at home' on the page that, while not exactly effortless, he did make his labours seem as though he thoroughly enjoyed them.

The great testament to the man and his work is that he was appreciated and revered in his own lifetime, not just by generation after generation of fans and imitators, but by his students, colleagues, critics and even rivals. I'm certain he felt appreciated up until the very last. We should all be so fortunate.

Jon B Cooke

Editor: **Comic Book Artist**

Will Eisner was not a man of regret. By almost any standard, his career was a bona fide success, one almost beyond measure in terms of having an impact on a chosen field and his demeanour was that of one confident guy. And, by my reckoning, he was a happy and hopeful person who nurtured and encouraged hundreds, if not thousands, of sensitive creators in their struggles to attain long-coveted dreams.

Though my day job is as editor of **Comic Book Artist** magazine, I've also been collaborating with my filmmaker brother, Andrew D Cooke, on a film documentary on the life of this superlative creator and, as the interviewer who tried to fend off boredom from our subject between setups, I would engage Will in small talk.

During one chat, the master reflected on a slight sore spot in his life, one that revealed the tiniest tinge of regret and an aspect I was surprised to hear. (I'm paraphrasing here; the camera was turned off at this time.) "My father," he sighed, "always hoped I would become a businessman, and I think he wasn't too happy with my choice of career." His tone betrayed a hint of melancholy, a rare sound indeed from so optimistic and graceful a man.

When my friend died last week, I spent some time pondering father Eisner's alleged disappointment with son Will's vocational choice – it was a tender and revealing moment to witness such telling – and I was struck, upon reflecting on Will Eisner: Businessman, just how misguided the Old Man was. In this 'industry,' so overrun with inept and petty managers – be they called publisher, editor or president – who trample the sensitivities of too many talented artists and writers in their desperate charge to exploit creativity, I believe that Will was as ethical, courageous, daring, imaginative, ambitious and compassionate a comicbook business man as ever there was. Only the legendary Joe Kubert – another of this field's most beloved father figures – comes close to being as masterful at keeping an eye on the prize: financial independence at the expense of no one else.

So I like to think that Papa Eisner has amended his thinking, maybe gazing kindly towards the stellar and superlative achievements of his son, one of the three greatest minds ever to grace the comic book world – the other two being Kirby and Kurtzman, in my opinion. To me, the graceful, generous, and truly humble visionary who was Will Eisner almost single-handedly showed the funnybook industry, one which manufactured dreams via lines on paper, that it could be more than a business. It could be an artform. That's gotta account for something... right, Pop?

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Who to play V opposite Star Wars actress's Evey?

Mike Conroy's Frame to Frame

Examining the latest developments between films and comics

THE WACHOWSKI Brothers and Joel Silver have cast Natalie Portman to take the female lead in the production based on *V for Vendetta*, Alan Moore and artist David Lloyd's 1982 **Warrior** serial.

It's an inspired bit of casting. The 23-year-old actress – who portrays Princess now Senator Amidala/Padmé Naberrie-Skywalker – in the opening three chapters of George Lucas's *Star Wars* saga has demonstrated her versatility in such movies as *Anywhere but Here*, *Where the Heart Is* and *Cold Mountain*. She's more than capable of handling the role of Evey, who goes from vulnerable and naive orphan to abused and confused victim before finally accepting her fate.

V for Vendetta – which was concluded at DC in 1989 – is as much Evey's story as it is V's but, while Portman's casting has passed almost without comment, many are wondering which actor would be suitable for the lead role. It's interesting to note that there's almost as much discussion devoted to V's casting as there was given over to the man in the Guy Fawkes' mask's real – never revealed – identity when the story initially saw print.

And that's the point... nobody knows who V really is. As Moore put it, "I was going to go on from this point and tell you exactly who V really is but I'm afraid I've run out of room. The only real hint I can give is that V isn't Evey's father, Whistler's mother, or Charley's aunt. Beyond that, I'm afraid you're on your own."

V with a skilled orator such as Richard Burton, rather than a boomer like Brian "Onward my brave Hawkmen" Blessed.

Anonymous rebel

V was a cypher, a symbol and that's the way he should stay. We shouldn't see who's behind the mask nor – other than as it relates to the story – should we care. Let the rebel's anonymity add to the film's intrigue and mystery.

What certainly isn't needed is a big name star doffing his disguise and undermining the story's integral structure just because there's a perceived need to show the audience where the big bucks went.

When Sly Stallone removed the helmet in *Judge Dredd* he upset a lot of **2000 AD** traditionalists. Revealing V's identity would go beyond riding roughshod over almost two decades of comics history. His remaining an enigma is fundamental to the success of the drama.

If V is identified, the traditional movie making approach is then to justify his actions, explain his motives. That would merely undermine the story as it currently exists and make the film something other than *V for Vendetta*. But we've passed that way before.

Anyway, a star in the title role isn't a necessity. Who'd heard of Christopher Reeve before *Superman* and, although Michael Keaton wasn't exactly an unknown, Tim Burton thought it was more important to spend a big slice of his *Batman* mega budget on persuading Jack Nicholson to don the Joker's guise.

What would work well would be someone with a powerful voice; a skilled orator such as Richard Burton or – these days – Sir Anthony Hopkins or Sir Ian McKellen rather than a boomer like Brian "Onward my brave Hawkmen" Blessed.

But their distinct tones make Hopkins and McKellen's voices instantly recognisable and there is a need for V to be a completely blank slate as far as the audience is concerned.

Knowing who the actor is – even if never seen – would undermine V's impact in much the same way that knowing it was Kiefer Sutherland on the other end of the line weakened the tension in *Phone Booth*. An unknown actor – or at least one without such a distinctive voice – in that role would have kept the suspense rolling until much closer to the closing credits.

Darth Vader

So, maybe the answer is to cast two actors, one to remain masked and be the physical V while the other does the voice. It worked for Darth Vader.

But the fact that nobody's yet been up for the part is just one of the things that will make it difficult for James McTeigue – who's making his directorial debut on *V* – to hit the touted November 5 US opening date. Shooting's set to begin in Berlin in March but not only is Portman the only cast member on board, she's got to finish her commitment to *Free Zone* before she can get on to *V*.

The Guy Fawkes connection makes that premiere date felicitous but will anybody in America have any inkling of the significance of the 'Remember, Remember the 5th of November' tagline on the teaser poster?

Italian CGI

Launched in 1985, writer Tiziano Sclavi's **Dylan Dog** has sold more than 80 million copies worldwide.

Many fans of the London-based private eye consider his adventures to be a precursor to *The X-Files*. Divorces, missing persons and such other mundane matters aren't of interest to the unusually named Dog. His area of expertise is strange and inexplicable phenomena. In the past, he's been called upon to investigate serial killers as well as werewolves, vampires, ghosts, ghouls and other manifestations of the supernatural and occult.

Sounds like a great idea for a live action horror movie but that's not the direction Platinum Studios has chosen to go. It has teamed up with Relativity Management and The Shop Animation Studios to produce *Dylan Dog: The Fourth Kingdom*, which is being touted as the first CGI-animated thriller. The story follows the PI as he tries to stop a supernatural serial killer intent on becoming a new deity and ruler of The Fourth Kingdom – a new afterlife. If Dog fails, the current love of his life will die and the forces of heaven and hell may unleash Armageddon upon the Earth.

Doubtless it's not being aimed at the same audience that watches *Toy Story*, *Ice Age* or even *The Incredibles*, but are adults likely to want to see animated horror? Hard call.

Another CGI feature aimed at an older audience was 2001's *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*. That cost an estimated $137 million to get on the screen – with another $30 million going on marketing – but only took $85 million at the box office although video and DVD sales and rentals have now pushed it close to achieving break even.

And, on the subject of CGI horror, do you remember the attempt by the late lamented ***Cool Beans World*** to be first with such a feature? The company was working on the Pat Mills-written *Saintly* back in 2002 but that film died when the Sheffield-based online comics publisher collapsed.

Getting back to *Dylan Dog*, it is to be directed by Ian Pearson. Co-founder of The Shop, he was formerly the CEO of Mainframe Entertainment, where he worked on such projects as *Barbie in the Nutcracker and Action Man*. Oh-kay.

Celebrity superheroes

Stan Lee's back in the news... again.

The man who doesn't know the meaning of the word quit is set to create around 25 characters based on clients of the Diverse Talent Group for an animated series in which the celebrities will become superheroes to fight creatures from other worlds.

Discussing the project, which is to be produced by the co-creator of the Marvel Universe's POW Entertainment in collaboration with the Celebrities in Action production company, Stan the Man proclaimed, "After having invented countless fictional characters over the years, what a kick it is to be tackling a project as original and unique as creating new personas and storylines for actual, world famous celebrities. And what a challenge. Imagine making super-heroes of people who are already super-heroes! This I'm gonna enjoy!"

We wait with bated breath to hear just who these 'celebrities' will be.

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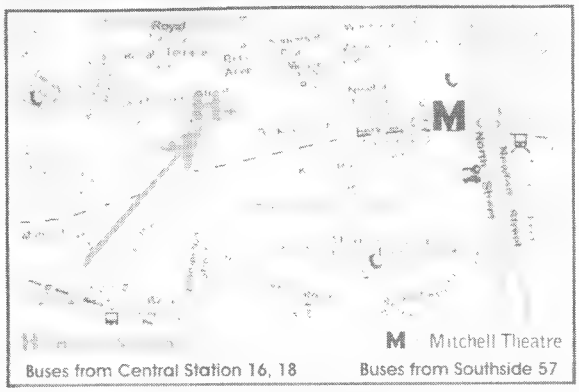

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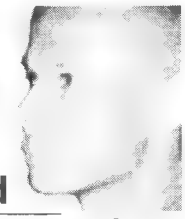


Talking Shop with Stephen Holland

Reminding people there's a real mainstream out there

HELLBLAZER readers, come on down! **Constantine** (the comicbook adaptation of the film adaptation of the comicbook) has just arrived. Now you have a choice, for a fairly equal fee, you can be disappointed at the cinema or in the comfort of your own home.

How can you successfully compress two hours of film footage, dialogue and special effects into a flaccid 64 pages? You can't, and in this case the first seven pages were so lacking in lustre that a whole can of Mr. Sheen would fail to put a shine on them. More than that I cannot say, for further than that I failed to go.

Now, **American Splendor: Our Movie Year** – that makes sense. It's always been an autobiographical comic, so why not write another comic about your life during the year they filmed the comic of your life? We're spiralling into self-referential insanity here, but it's fun to watch and, come to think of it, they really s*hould* make a film of it.

"But Stephen, what we'd really like to know is how comicbook films affect your business?" Oh, how you lie. Never mind, the answer is that although the first *Batman* film drew some new blood into comic shops, the only one to make a substantial impact on us recently was *Ghost World*. Well over a hundred new faces, half of them women, came in to check out the comic and then when they realised they'd just picked up 100% quality, they came back again and again. Result!

> Anything that gets people into comics has to be good – doesn't it? Well, no, not if their misconceptions that comicbooks are shit is reinforced.

The *Spider-Man* films have brought in more youngsters well under the age than the first film's rating suggested a good idea, but what do censors know? And yes, *American Splendor* delivered its fair share of people, but the only new recruits I can recall from *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* movie was a granddad and his 13-year-old charge whom I had to turn away from the second volume because, well, "There's an invisible rape scene. It's sodomy as comedy, and I really don't think –" "No there isn't, we've just seen the film..." At which point I was at a slight loss for words.

The idea of comicbook adaptations, on the whole, is to tap into media that have a wider following than us: grab the comicbook readers that also used to play with Transformers (for example) and lure in those who don't pick up comics but used to twist plastic as kids. That worked. Briefly. (Dreamwave, RIP).

But the most recent, ludicrous move is to adapt console games.

If you're not familiar with *Devil May Cry*, it stars cleaver-clutching, ash-haired, cloak-coutured half-demon Dante (Nick Rhodes on spinach, basically), blowing holes into giants in much the same way that Duran Duran did with their cover versions album. Now, *Grand Theft Auto* aside, you don't buy a computer game for its wit. Special effects, some decent puzzlage, and a host of hand-held hardware you'd be hard pushed to fit inside the average aircraft hangar let alone down the front of your troos – that is the order of the Playstation day. Plot's a bonus, dialogue optional, wit is very rare. So a comicbook adaptation...? There was nothing to shoot, nothing to solve, and I can absolutely promise you that there was no evidence of wit whatsoever. Just a lot of pedestrian rambling and a single tacky gusset shot. You'd've almost been better off with the last Jeffrey Archer novel. Almost.

Then came *Metal Gear Solid*. For those with more constructive things to do with their time than myself, *MGS* is one of the top-tier computer games in which you play Solid Snake, an expert in infiltration, espionage and whispering gruffly into an internally grafted headset. Nothing is ever straight forward, and every so often he'll stumble upon a genetically modified loon with a tricky ability, at which point stealth gives way to the lobbing of grenades, the hurling of insults and at least five reloads before success.

So, superpowers, sure, plus they certainly nabbed the right artist (Ashley Woods). But it was a comic that simply followed the plot of game. No new story, no extra insight, nothing to show that comics were cool. How miffed must fans of that have been?

I suppose they could have invented their own fun by sneaking it into their house undetected, then reading the mag in a ventilation duct whilst wearing night vision in a radiation suit, but really...

Comics have lost out to computer games over the last decade. It's where a lot of superhero readers in particular have gone to, because on the consoles you can have your adrenaline rush, you can enjoy the same spectacular visuals but above all you can interact! You're in the thick of it! *You* press the buttons, *you* make it all happen. You *are* that superhero.

The most you can do with a comicbook adaptation is to turn the pages.

Although, here's a tip for the **Silent Hill: Dying Inside** trade paperback. As with the original source, there are several secret alternate endings. Read the book through once, save it on the shelf, and then open again. Proceed to page 85 and instead of reading the incantation in the book provided, pick up the lighter at the bottom of the second panel and set fire to the comic. If you want to see the "House in Ashes" scenario, quit the room immediately and make your way to the local pub. If you want to see the "Ambulance Speeding through Congestion" scenario, wait until the "Time for a New Carpet" sequence kicks in, then attempt to put the combined items out with your bare hands. As a special bonus there'll then be a "Four Month Waiting List" feature ready to unfold, complete with a Wonky Diagnosis mini-game.

Anything that gets people into comics has to be good – doesn't it? Well, no, not if their misconceptions that comicbooks are shit is reinforced.

Sin City, on the other hand... Now that could be a gold mine.

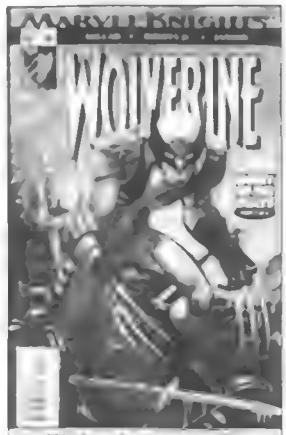
Stephen Holland runs Page 45, a comic shop in Nottingham Yes, he plays computer games Yes, he should grow up. No, he doesn't care

Comics Economics

Top 100 US comicbook sales for October 2004

Identity Crisis up to #1

Rank	Prev	Title, Issue, Price & Estimated Orders	Publisher
1	(3)	**Identity Crisis** #5 $3.95 (125,637)	DC Comics
2	(20)	**Wolverine** #20 $2.25 (116,831)	Marvel
3	(4)	**Superman** #210 $2.50 (113,480)	DC Comics
4	(N)	**Secret War Book Three** $3.99 (109,745)	Marvel
5	(8)	**Uncanny X-Men** #450 $2.25 (101,506)	Marvel
6	(5)	**Uncanny X-Men** #451 $2.25 (97,498)	Marvel
7	(7)	**Ultimate Spider-Man** #66 $2.25 (95,917)	Marvel
8	(N)	**Green Lantern: Rebirth** #1 $2.95 (95,092)	DC Comics
9	(7)	**Ultimate Spider-Man** #67 $2.25 (95,071)	Marvel
10	(5)	**Ultimate X-Men** #52 $2.25 (93,833)	Marvel



Wolverine up to #2

11	(14)	**Amazing Spider-Man** #513 $2.25 (89,615)	Marvel
12	(12)	**X-Men** #163 $2.25 (88,615)	Marvel
13	(2)	**Wolverine** #21 $2.25 (83,565)	Marvel
14	(15)	**Ultimate Nightmare** #5 $2.25 (83,208)	Marvel
15	(16)	**X-Men End Book One Dreamers & Demons** #4 $2.99 (75,073)	Marvel
16	(19)	**Batman** #633 $2.95 (69,946)	DC Comics
17	(18)	**Marvel Knights Spider-Man** #7 $2.99 (69,918)	Marvel
18	(23)	**JLA** #107 $2.25 (65,225)	DC Comics
19	(21)	**Teen Titans** #17 $2.50 (63,154)	DC Comics
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 60,000			
20	(N)	**Teen Titans/Legion Special** #1 $3.50 (59,293)	DC Comics
21	(26)	**Daredevil** #66 $2.99 (53,138)	Marvel
22	(30)	**Spectacular Spider-Man** #20 $2.25 (51,159)	Marvel
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 50,000			
23	(64)	**Thor** #85 $2.99 (49,368)	Marvel
24	(27)	**Ultimate Elektra** #3 $2.25 (49,298)	Marvel
25	(24)	**Strange** #2 $3.50 (48,410)	Marvel
26	(28)	**Excalibur** #6 $2.99 (48,410)	Marvel
27	(33)	**Detective Comics** #799 $2.95 (48,228)	DC Comics
28	(32)	**Fantastic Four** #519 $2.99 (47,969)	Marvel
29	(31)	**X-Force** #3 $2.99 (46,528)	Marvel
30	(34)	**New X-Men** #6 $2.99 (45,647)	Marvel
31	(36)	**Conan** #9 $2.99 (44,673)	Dark Horse
32	(38)	**Robin** #131 $2.25 (44,570)	DC Comics
33	(43)	**Flash** #215 $2.25 (44,024)	DC Comics
34	(44)	**Nightwing** #98 $2.25 (43,818)	DC Comics
35	(39)	**Batman: Gotham Knights** #58 $2.50 (43,534)	DC Comics
36	(45)	**The Punisher** #12 $2.99 (42,702)	Marvel
37	(51)	**Outsiders** #17 $2.50 (41,814)	DC Comics
38	(52)	**Batman Legends of the Dark Knight** #184 $2.50 (41,170)	DC
39	(46)	**Action Comics** #820 $2.50 (41,114)	DC Comics
40	(50)	**JSA** #66 $2.50 (41,023)	DC Comics
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 40,000			
41	(N)	**Sabretooth** #1 $2.99 (39,722)	Marvel
42	(55)	**Batgirl** #57 $2.50 (39,631)	DC Comics
43	(47)	**Justice League Elite** #4 $2.50 (38,295)	DC Comics
44	(53)	**Catwoman** #36 $2.50 (37,554)	DC Comics
45	(42)	**Hulk & Thing: Hard Knocks** #2 $3.50 (37,519)	Marvel
46	(65)	**Captain America** #32 $2.99 (37,309)	Marvel
47	(59)	**Marvel Knights 4** #11 $2.99 (36,825)	Marvel
48	(56)	**Doctor Spectrum** #3 $2.99 (36,552)	Marvel
49	(62)	**Adventures of Superman** #633 $2.50 (36,505)	DC Comics
50	(49)	**NYX** #5 $2.99 (35,749)	Marvel
51	(66)	**Exiles** #53 $2.99 (35,323)	Marvel
52	(41)	**Sabretooth** #2 $2.99 (35,022)	Marvel
53	(54)	**Gambit** #3 $2.99 (34,962)	Marvel
54	(N)	**Conan and the Daughters of Midora** $4.99 (34,665)	Dark Horse

55	(34)	**Soulfire** #2 $2.99 (34,364)	ASP
56	(1)	**Superman/Batman**#12 $2.95 (34,127)	DC Comics
57	(73)	**Iron Man** #89 $2.99 (33,483)	Marvel
58	(61)	**X-Men Unlimited** #5 $2.99 (32,910)	Marvel
59	(N)	**Official Handbk Marvel Universe Wolverine 2004** $3.99 (32,553)	Marvel
60	(72)	**Powers** #5 $2.95 (32,504)	Marvel
61	(62)	**Planetary** #21 $2.95 (32,266)	DC Comics
62	(79)	**Loki** #4 $3.50 (32,217)	Marvel
63	(78)	**Green Arrow** #43 $2.50 (32,133)	DC Comics
64	(75)	**Birds of Prey** #75 $2.95 (32,091)	DC Comics
65	(67)	**Rogue** #4 $2.99 (31,301)	Marvel
66	(83)	**Spawn** #139 $2.50 (30,652)	Image
67	(58)	**Black Widow** #2 $2.99 (30,489)	Marvel
68	(N)	**Solo** #1 $4.95 (30,482)	DC Comics
69	(79)	**Identity Disc** #5 $2.99 (30,175)	Marvel
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 30,000			
70	(N)	**Tomb of Dracula** #1 $2.99 (29,762)	Marvel
71	(85)	**Cable Deadpool** #8 $2.99 (28,986)	Marvel
72	(68)	**Bullseye Greatest Hits** #2 $2.99 (28,986)	Marvel
73	(84)	**Powerless** #5 $2.99 (28,636)	Marvel
74	(57)	**GI Joe vs Transformers Volume 2** #2 $2.95 (28,342)	Devil's Due
75	(98)	**Firestorm** #6 $2.50 (28,084)	DC Comics
76	(90)	**Captain America & The Falcon** #8 $2.99 (27,859)	Marvel
77	(74)	**Invaders** #3 $2.99 (27,286)	Marvel
78	(N)	**Identity Crisis** #1 $3.95 (27,265)	DC Comics
79	(89)	**District X** #6 $2.99 (27,097)	Marvel
80	(96)	**Y: The Last Man** #27 $2.95 (26,929)	DC Comics
81	(78)	**We 3** #2 $2.95 (26,663)	DC Comics
82	(N)	**Authority Revolution** #1 $2.95 (26,572)	DC Comics
83	(86)	**Amazing Fantasy** #5 $2.99 (26,349)	Marvel
84	(94)	**Emma Frost** #16 $2.99 (26,349)	Marvel
85	(69)	**Madrox** #2 $2.99 (26,167)	Marvel
86	(97)	**Wonder Woman** #209 $2.25 (25,964)	DC Comics
87	(92)	**JSA: Strange Adventures** #3 $3.50 (25,759)	DC Comics
88	(N)	**Street Fighter** #1 0$2.95 (25,474)	Devil's Due
89	(106)	**Fables** #30 $2.50 (25,390)	DC Comics
90	(81)	**Fathom: Dawn of War** #2 $2.99 (25,076)	Aspen Entertainment
91	(103)	**She Hulk** #8 $2.99 (24,929)	Marvel
92	(82)	**Adam Strange** #2 $2.95 (24,677)	DC Comics
93	(101)	**Mystique** #20 $2.99 (24,446)	Marvel
94	(116)	**Ex Machina** #5 $2.95 (24,124)	DC Comics
95	(71)	**Transformers: War Within Volume 3** #2 $2.95 (23,943)	DreamWave
96	(99)	**Doom Patrol** #5 $2.50 (23,915)	DC Comics
97	(91)	**Elektra: The Hand** #3 $2.99 (23,040)	Marvel
98	(113)	**Hawkman** #33 $2.50 (22,704)	DC Comics
99	(N)	**Ocean** #1 $2.95 (22,551)	DC Comics
100	(114)	**Aquaman** #23 (22,369)	DC Comics

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Will Eisner: The Human Spirit

Novel Graphics by Paul Gravett

Highlighting the latest and best in graphic novels

SO WHAT are your plans for your old age? Slow down a bit, work fewer hours or not at all, maybe retire to Florida and relax by the pool? That's what Will Eisner could have chosen to do back in the late Seventies. Eisner's long, hardworking career had lifted him up from the cut-price comicbook sweatshops of the Thirties to the relative financial security of the profits from his perennially reprinted Spirit stories and his successful informational comics company American Visuals Corporation. He'd made it and could look forward to an easy life.

But as he approached 60 Eisner found a renewed passion and curiosity about what comics might become next, how they might be evolved into a different sort of literature. Instead of coasting into his twilight years, he used his financial security to pay for one of the most valuable things in anyone's life – time out. He could drop everything for several months and concentrate on a deeply personal project, working 'on spec' with no advance, client or contract in mind, no collaborators or assistants. Eisner was flying solo, creating for himself.

In these circumstances, the blank page presented a very different canvas to him. Why merely repeat everything he'd done before? The number of pages at his disposal, the style and composition, the subject matter and treatment, were all his to choose. Instead of relying on the standard hard black outlines and tightly-ruled panel borders typical of comicbooks, he moved into drawings in washes and tones, floating on the page. As for his stories, he followed the sound advice of "Write what you know" and took himself back to his childhood experiences growing up in a Bronx tenement through the Depression.

Hawking around this strange, eccentric quartet of rather sad period vignettes of Jewish life, Eisner did not find a publisher straightaway. **A Contract With God** probably baffled most publishers. Finally, in 1978, his 60th year, he found a small outfit, Baronet Books, willing to risk it. They published it in hardback, without a dust jacket, and at the same time in a larger print run in paperback. How was this puzzling illustrated book gong to be described to punters? Eisner suggested putting the term "graphic novel" on the paperback cover.

Now, Eisner did not "invent" this term or the concept. It had already been coined as long ago as November 1964, in a small circulation comics newsletter solely for members of the Amateur Press Association, when American fan and critic Richard Kyle suggested it as a way to describe his vision of a "long form comic book".

Eisner commented on this to Time.Comix journalist Andrew Arnold, "I had not known at the time that someone had used that term before." He seems to have arrived at the term quite independently.

He followed the sound advice of "Write what you know" and took himself back to his childhood experiences...

Eisner was also well aware that there had been many attempts to create "a graphic novel" before his. One of his own formative influences was the powerful wordless picture story **God's Man** by Lynd Ward which he had marvelled at in 1929 (recently reissued by Dover Books). He told Arnold, "I can't claim to have invented the wheel, but I felt I was in a position to change the direction of comics."

That is exactly what Eisner did. It's diverting but ultimately fruitless squabbling over who "invented" the *first* graphic novel. What matters is that Eisner's stand had a major, meaningful impact on his fellow professionals and their successors, from Jack Kirby to Art Spiegelman. He was committed to reinvigorating the medium's ambitions, to building upon the adult themes pioneered by the maverick young geniuses of underground comix, to aspiring to literary seriousness and this inspired others to follow his example. It became his mission for the rest of his life – crafting book after book, teaching, travelling the world, interviewing his peers, theorising about the medium, presenting the profession's Oscars, the Eisners.

What kept Eisner going for over 20 years? He once explained it to Neil Gaiman. "He told me about a film he had seen once, in which a jazz musician kept playing because he was still in search of The Note. That it was out there somewhere, and he kept going to reach it. And that was why Will kept going: in the hopes that he'd one day do something that satisfied him. He was still looking for The Note."

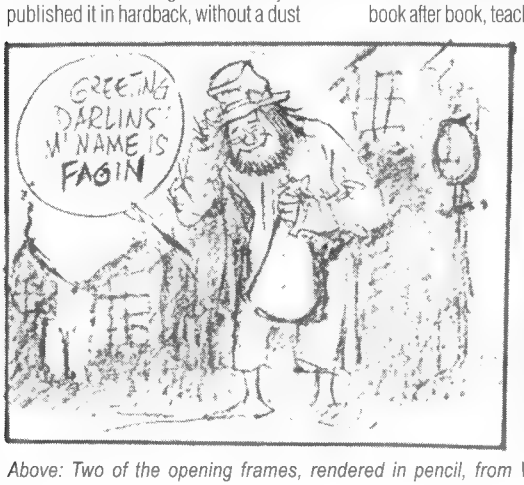
When I started this column about graphic novels, I simply had to start with Eisner; after his death on January 3rd, I had to return to him. His last two works are among his most challenging and heartfelt and reflect his preoccupations during his latter days – a deepening interest in his Jewish heritage and a desire to confront the roots of persistent anti-Semitism.

One of the most negative stereotypes of Jews is the notorious rogue Fagin from **Oliver Twist**, written by Charles Dickens. George Cruikshank illustrated him for the book as a typical swarthy hook-nosed character, adopting a common Jewish caricature relied on by artists before him. Eisner felt this image was all wrong and had contributed "to further reprehensible stereotyping of Jews by bigots throughout history". To address this in **Fagin the Jew** *(www.doubleday.com)*, he researched the period and reinvented Fagin's appearance and fleshed out his back-ground to reflect history more accurately.

Eisner understands the necessity and convenience of stereotypes in comics and uses them himself, but he hoped that in his Fagin he could arrive at "a more truthful stereotype". You will never look at Ron Moody's portrayal in *Oliver!* in the same way again.

For his final masterpiece out in May *(www.wwnorton.com)*, Eisner took on perhaps the single most pernicious source of anti-Semitism, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. **The Plot** reveals the twisted history of this Russian forgery that purported to reveal a Jewish conspiracy to rule the world. As early as 1921 in **The Times**, these papers were proven to be false, and yet Eisner was stunned to discover they are still believed and propagated online to this day. To counter them, he wanted to create a work "that would be understood by the widest possible audience."

His search for that elusive Note drove him right to the final day before his heart surgery. In **The Plot** he has left us a rigourously researched and urgently necessary graphic documentary. This plea for truth and an end to racist lies is his last, lasting gift to us.



Above: Two of the opening frames, rendered in pencil, from Will Eisner's reimagining of Dickens' classic in ***Fagin the Jew****.*

PG tips

Here are some more recommended graphic novels worth looking out for.

Tex, The Lonesome Rider
(Joe Kubert & Claudio Nizzi: SAF Comics) March $15.95
Tex is an Italian institution, a true 'Spaghetti Western' which has sold more than half a billion graphic novels worldwide since it was created in 1948 by writer Gian Luigi Bonelli and artist Aurelio Galleppini.

The exploits of rugged yet humane Texas ranger Tex Willer and his partner Kit Carson are still huge sellers in Italy today in monthly 100-page albums and in larger 240-page specials.

Ever since I heard that the great Joe Kubert had illustrated one of these fumetti giants, I've longed to see it in English. A while back, Dark Horse announced that his epic would be translated as a series of pricey colorized hardbacks (if the first of these really did see print, I'm not the only one who missed it). Now SAF is finally releasing it the way it was meant to be seen, in its original Italian format of one bumper black-and-white package, the biggest wodge of prime Kubert ever put between covers. Yeeee-hah!

www.safcomics.com

Frankenstein Now and Forever
(Alex Baladi; Typocrat Press) February .....£12.95/$19.95
From Switzerland, where comics were 'invented' in the early 19th century, comes Alex Baladi, one of the most provocative members of an engaging generation of early 21st century Swiss graphic novelists. As Baladi unravels the fragile lives and minds of two young women lost in a soulless city, he weaves in the Frankenstein story's themes of alienation, rejection and the need for companionship and love. Baladi's stark graphics and subtle transitions reassert the power of Mary Shelley's monster as a timeless metapor for our fractured, patchwork identities. His poignant meditation will haunt you long after you put his book down. ***www.typocrat.com***

Kramer's Ergot 5
(Ed: Sammy Harkham; Gingko Press GmbH) February £22
Like **Zap** in the '60s or **Raw** in the '80s, **Kramer's Ergot** is America's defining comix laboratory for the new 21st century. What started in 2000 as a modest, monochrome, pulp-paper anthology self-published by editor/cartoonist Sammy Harkham has blossomed into a oversized, colour doorstop of an artbook. Sammy's purview now goes beyond North America to welcome Helge Reumann and Xavier Robel from Switzerland, Fabio Viscogliosi from France and Scotland's Tom Gauld – over 20 authors in all across 320 pages. If anything, **KE 5** is even stronger than the last, more tightly edited and focussed on forms of storytelling.

www.avodahbooks.com

Advance Listings

READERS: You can use this Advance Listings *section as an order form with your direct market store or mail order supplier. Simply mark the items you require, copy or remove these pages (or list them on a separate piece of paper) and give it to your supplier, together with a note of your name, address and phone number to guarantee not missing any of the new titles being published. Certain suppliers may not accept standing orders, so check with them first. All prices of US titles listed are in dollars. Import prices are usually converted at a rate of $1.00 = 85p UK sterling. Shipping dates given are the earliest date product will reach stores. All dates, prices and information are assumed to be accurate as provided by publishers.* *Compiled by Jim Hannah*

The following are 32 page colour titles unless stated.

ON SALE FROM
MARCH 2

Dark Horse

one-shot **Cravan** (Mike Richardson + Rick Geary & Geary) True story about Arthur Cravan, major figure in pre-WWI cutting-edge art circles. A self-confessed thief, forger, and con-artist, he was known variously as a novelist, poet, painter, art critic, lecturer, publisher, and the lightweight boxing champion of France. 72pg b&w $14.95

Hellsing Vol 6 (Kohta Hirano; tpbk) The Hellsing organisation is embattled as London is falling to Nazi vampire forces, turning the city's citizens into rivers of blood and a population of ghouls. 192pg b&w $13.95

Samurai: Heaven & Earth 4 (of 5; Ron Marz & Luke Ross + Jason Keith) The samurai Shiro has travelled thousands of miles and fought countless battles in pursuit of his kidnapped lover Yoshiko. Now, finally, he's found her. She is imprisoned within fabulous Versailles as a plaything for France's Sun King, Louis XIV! $2.99

Star Wars: Empire 31 *(Sons* 3 of 5; Thomas Andrews & Adriana Melo + Michael Atiyeh) Imperial Slave Ships are coming to take possession of the conquered population of Jabiim, and the only thing standing between them and the successful completion of their mission are two rebel X-Wing pilots. $2.99

Usagi Yojimbo Vol 19: Fathers and Sons (Stan Sakai; tpbk) An ambush on the fugitive Lone Goat Assassin and his child, Gorogoro leaves Lone Goat wounded and his son too young to help. Unable to seek proper medical attention, Lone Goat collapses in an abandoned house. Collects #69-75 of the series. 184pg $15.95

DC Comics

Deadshot 4 (Christos N. Gage & Steven Cummings + Jimmy Palmiotti) Deadshot has cleaned up his turf in Star City, keeping his daughter and her mother safe. But he's visited by an old criminal who thinks Deadshot eliminated the competition so he and his crooked pals can take it over. $2.99

Detective Comics 804 *(City of Crime* 4 of 12; David Lapham + Mike Carey & Ramon Bachs + Nathan Massengill) The people of Gotham City are going insane, and only Robin can save the innocents. 40pg $2.99

one-shot **Fables: The Mean Seasons** (Bill Willingham & various; *Vertigo;* tpbk) Collecting issues #22 and #28-33. Features two tales of Bigby's exploits during World War II as well as *The Year After*, which follows the aftermath of the Adversary's attempt to conquer Fabletown. 168pg $14.99

Fallen Angel 19 (Peter David & David Lopez + Fernando Blanco) Sachs and Violens have hit Bête Noire, and they have the Fallen Angel in their sights. $2.99

Firestorm 11 (Dan Jolley & Dale Eaglesham + Wade von Grawbadger) With the threat of Killer Frost eliminated, Ronnie Raymond – the original Firestorm – joins current Firestorm Jason Rusch just in time for an attack by Multiplex and Typhoon. $2.50

The Intimates 5 (Joe Casey & Giuseppe Camuncoli + Sandra Hope; *WildStorm)* But what secrets are hidden within the pages of a certain student's angst-filled diary entries? $2.99

one-shot **JLA: Pain of the Gods** (Chuck Austen & Ron Garney; tpbk) Collecting JLA #101-106. The members of the JLA are forced to face times when they were unable to save an innocent or prevent disaster. 144pg $12.99

John Constantine – Hellblazer Special: Papa Midnite 2 (Mat Johnson & Tony Akins + Dan Green; *Vertigo)* Fortune's ghost forces Midnite to relive the darkest tragedy of his past. $2.99

Justice League Elite 9 (Joe Kelly & Doug Mahnke + Tom Nguyen) As the Elite mourn the sacrificial death of one of their own, Al-Sheikh discovers the identity of the murderer within the group. ... $2.50

Justice League Unlimited 7 (Adam Beechen & Ethen Beavers) The Justice League is assembled to help Orion and the New Gods stop Darkseid from unleashing his new weapon: the X-Cannon. $2.25

new **Lex Luthor: Man of Steel** 1 (Brian Azzarello & Lee Bermejo) Man of Steel reveals why Luthor chooses to be the proverbial thorn in Superman's side – simply put, to save humanity from an untrusted alien being. In this story, Superman is the villain. $2.99

Looney Tunes 124 (various) Duck Twacy goes into overdrive against a car-parts crook. $2.25

Mad #452 (The Usual Gang of Idiots) More hijinks and hilarity as only the MAD crew can deliver. 48pg b&w $3.50

one-shot **Nikolai Dante: The Great Game** (Robbie Morrison & various, tpbk) *See Close-Up, below.*

Promethea Book 4 (Alan Moore & J.H. Williams III and Mick Gray; *America' Best Comics;* tpbk) The conclusion of Promethea's sprawling tour of the higher realms of the spirit is collected. Reprinting Promethea #19-25. 192pg $14.99

Superman: Strength 3 (Scott McCloud & Adair Amancio + Terry Austin) Superman has barely held his own against an adversary who outwits him at every turn. It looks like the Man of Steel has his foe on the run this time, though – or is it just another clever ruse? 48pg ... $5.99

Swamp Thing 13 *(Measure of Faith* 1 of 2; Joshua Dysart & Timothy Green II; *Vertigo)* With Houma recovering from all the horrors of its past spilling up from the depths of Hell, a strange preacher appears, offering a macabre salvation to the town's people. $2.99

Toe Tags Featuring George Romero 6 (George Romero & Tommy Castillo + Rodney Ramos) It's the final battle between undead hero Damien Cross, an army of resurrected dead, and the US power elite. $2.99

Y: The Last Man 32 *(Ring of Truth* 5 of 5; Brian K. Vaughan & Goran Sudzuka + José Marzan Jr; *Vertigo)* Just when Dr Mann discovers the answer to how Yorick and Ampersand survived the mysterious plague, an unforeseen adversary swoops in and steals a major element of the possible cure. $2.99

Marvel

Captain America & The Falcon 13 *(American Psycho* 1 of 2; Priest & Dan Jurgens) Because of the Falcon's erratic behaviour, Captain America is forced to sever his long-time partnership with The Falcon while the Anti-Cap goes on a murderous rampage. $2.99

Exiles 60 *(Son of Apocalypse* 1 of 2; Tony Bedard & Jim Calafiore) The Exiles find themselves returned home to the Age of Apocalypse – with the unlikeliest new teammate – Apocalypse's homicidal son, Holocaust! $2.99

Exiles Vol 9: Bump in the Night (Tony Bedard & James Calafiore + Mizuki Sakakibara; tpbk) It's up to the Exiles, the Avengers, and the Fantastic Four to keep the Earth from becoming Ego Junior! Collects Exiles #52-58. 168pg .. $17.99

new **Marvel Adventures: Spider-Man** 1 (Kitty Fross & Patrick Scherberger) Acclaimed children's book author Kitty Fross joins the House of Ideas with her take on the famed origin of the hero known as Spider-Man. ... $2.25

new **Marvel Adventures: The Thing** 1 (Brandon Thomas & Michael O'Hare) On the trail of a mystical item that's fallen into the wrong hands, Dr Strange and The Thing must race against the clock to repair the course of Destiny! $2.25

Marvel Team-Up 6 *(The Golden Child* 6 of 6; Robert Kirkman & Scott Kolins) The epic struggle over Paul Patterson has caught the eye of a certain one-eyed S.H.I.E.L.D. agent. $2.25

Shanna, The She-Devil 2 (of 7; Frank Cho; *Marvel Knights)* Raptors become the least of the Doc and his crew's problems when Shanna begins to roam the camp and create shockwaves of her own. $3.50

Spider-Girl 84 (Tom DeFalco & Ron Frenz.) Spider-Girl takes on the new Venom, Phil Urich faces the Goblin Queen, and Doc Magus and Dr Strange team up to battle Zarathos for the life of Darkdevil! $2.99

new **Spider-Man: Spidey Strikes Back Vol 1 Digest** (Todd Dezago + Mike Raicht & Logan Lubera + Valentine de Landro) Spider-Man considers taking a break from his superhero duties. Collects Marvel Age Spider-Man #17-20. 96pg $5.99

Stoker's Dracula 4 (Roy Thomas & Dick Giordano; *Marvel Knights)* Can our heroes track Drac down before he reaches the safety of his castle, and will they be able to save Mina from becoming a thrall of the Lord of the Undead? 48pg b&w ... $3.99

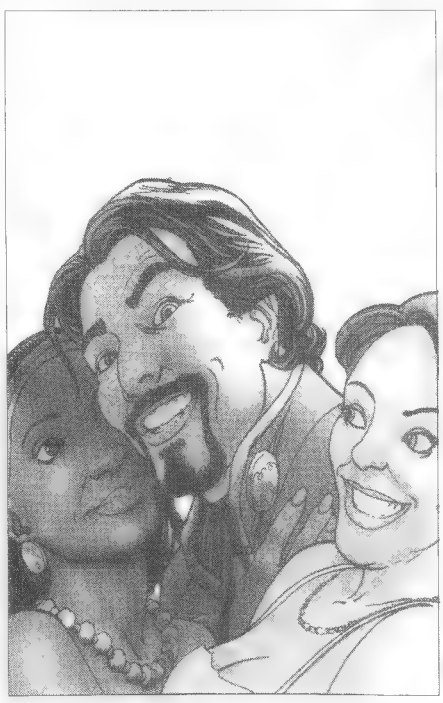
new **Ultimate Iron Man** 1 (Orson Scott Card & Andy Kubert) If you thought The Ultimates told you everything you needed to know about Ultimate Iron Man, think again. . $2.99

Ultimate Spider-Man 73 *(Hobgoblin* 2 of 6; Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley) Harry Osborn learns the horrifying truth of his father's existence as the evil Green Goblin. $2.25

new **X-Men: Age of Apocalypse** 1 (of 5; Akira Yoshida & Chris Bachalo) Sinister has just unleashed a massive force unseen, unrivalled, and unbeatable. Magneto and the X-Men's only hope lies in tracking down a retired Weapon X. $2.99

one-shot **X-Men: Age of Apocalypse** (various) The creators involved in the original Age of Apocalypse event return for this double-sized issue, including a special pin-up section! 48pg $3.99

new **X-Men: The Complete Age of Apocalypse Epic Book** 1 (various; tpbk) In a cracked-mirror world ruled by the genocidal mutant despot Apocalypse, only one hope remains: Magneto and his Astonishing X-Men! Collects X-Men Chronicles #1-2, Tales from the Age of Apocalypse: By the Light, X-Man #-1, X-Man 1996 Annual, Tales from the Age of Apocalypse: Sinister Bloodlines and Blink #1-4. 360pg $29.99



close-up

Nikolai Dante: The Great Game

DC Comics

Writer: Robbie Morrison

Artists: Charlie Adlard + Simon Fraser

He's a lover, adventurer, gambler, and far too cool to kill. Nikolai Dante is fighting and drinking a path of mayhem and glory across future Russia. This second collection in the chronicles of Dante transports you to a world of danger, romance and adventure. 200pg $17.99

ON SALE MARCH 2

ON SALE FROM
MARCH 9

Dark Horse

Blade of the Immortal 99 *(Trickster* 1 of 4; Hiroaki Samura) Kidnapped and bound by three Itto-ryū warriors, Rin is unable to warn Manji that he's heading into a trap. Mature readers. b&w $2.99

Star Wars Tales 23 (Rob Williams + Joshua Ortega & Brandon Badeaux + Dustin Weaver) Thousands of years before the fall of Anakin Skywalker, other Jedi grappled with the same emotions. 64pg $5.99

DC Comics

one-shot **100%** (Paul Pope; *Vertigo;* tpbk) Collects the miniseries that tells three

separate but interconnected stories, shifting viewpoints and characters across the urban maze of 2038 Manhattan. 256pg b&w $24.99

100 Bullets 59 (Brian Azzarello & Eduardo Risso; *Vertigo)* Hot on the heels of a major player's death, the revealed Minutemen – led by Victor 'The Saint' – convene to discuss plans on where to make their next move. $2.50

Action Comics 825 (J.D. Finn & Ivan Reis + Marc Campos) Doomsday and Gog attack Superman in the middle of a deserted Metropolis, levelling the city. But will one of these villains turn and save Superman from destruction? 40pg $2.99

Aquaman 28 (John Arcudi & Patrick Gleason + Christian Alamy) The majority of the earth's surface is water, and Aquaman rules it all! But is it too much for just one man to protect and serve? $2.50

Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 189 (Shane McCarthy & Tommy Castillo + Rodney Ramos) We find Batman in the ultimate showdown with one of his oldest nemeses – the Riddler. Can this dangerously rejuvenated arch villain do what he's never been able to do before: Defeat the Dark Knight? $2.50

Bloodhound 9 (Dan Jolley & Leonard Kirk + Robin Riggs) The Bat-villain Zeiss faces Clevenger while a town catches fire around them! $2.99

Breach 3 (Bob Harras & Marcos Martin + Alvaro Lopez) Breach goes to South Africa to investigate his origins. But Breach's presence attracts the attention of a revitalised Kobra. $2.50

one-shot **Comic Cavalcade Archives** Vol 1 (various; hbk) A new archive reprints the first three issues of one of comics' greatest Golden Age anthology tiles (1942-1943). 276pg $49.99

Fables 35 (Bill Willingham & David Hahn; *Vertigo)* Jack continues to ride the Hollywood high of his new slickster lifestyle, losing sight of the enemies he's made along the way. $2.50

Gotham Central 29 (Greg Rucka & Stefano Gaudiano) Montoya and Allen must pursue the origins of an abandoned lab in Gotham – even if the trail leads them to Keystone City, home of The Flash! $2.50

Green Arrow 48 (Judd Winick & Tom Fowler + Rodney Ramos) Green Arrow and his allies battle to take down the robotic menace known as The Duke of Oil, as a bank heist gone bad gets worse! .. $2.50

JSA 71 *(JSA/JSA* 4 of 5; Geoff Johns & Don Kramer + Keith Champagne) Atom Smasher's meeting with the Atom doesn't go as planned, while Stargirl takes drastic measures to help Starman. $2.50

Mad Colour Special 11 (The Usual Gang of Idiots) Contains the Best of the Web, MAD Marginals XL, a featured Writer of the Month, more Readers' Choice picks, and other fun features. 48pg $3.99

Majestic 3 (Dan Abnett + Andy Lanning & Neil Googe + Trevor Scott; *WildStorm)* Lost inside the vast space vessel that has abducted all life from planet Earth, Majestic discovers the strange and disturbing truth behind its actions. $2.99

new **Monster Collection** Vol 1 (Itoh Sei & Yasuda Hitoshi) Kasche may have a talent for controlling beasts, but she's got a lot to learn about self-control before she can become a full-fledged summoner. 174pg b&w .. $9.99

Nightwing 105 *(Nightwing Year One* 5 of 6; Chuck Dixon + Scott Beatty & Scott McDaniel + Andy Owens) Dick Grayson and Jason Todd are hitting the town for the first time together... $2.25

Scooby-Doo 94 (John Rozum + Frank Strom & various) Daphne leads the gang in rescuing a haunted skate tour. $2.25

new **Seven Soldiers: Shining Knight** 1 (Grant Morrison & Simone Bianchi) Little do Knights of the Broken Table realise, but the only one within their ranks who can save what remains of their world is 16-year-old Sir Justin, a teenage warrior who, with his winged horse Victory, finds himself thrust into the maddening world of the 21st century to save mankind. $2.99

Sleeper Book 3: A Crooked Line (Ed Brubaker & Sean Phillips, *WildStorm;* tpbk) Collects Sleeper Season Two #1-6. Lynch is back in Holden's life and trying to bring him back to the side of the angels. But is it too late for Holden's soul to be saved? 144pg $14.95

one-shot **Superman/ Batman: Public Enemies** (Jeph Loeb & Ed McGuinness + Dexter Vines) Can our heroes take down a team composed of as Captain Marvel, Hawkman, Power Girl, and Black Lightning? 160pg $12.99

Vimanarama! 2 (of 3; Grant Morrison & Phillip Bond; *Vertigo)* Warring Indian gods and demons overrun England, transforming the country to suit their battle. 40pg $2.99

Wild Girl 5 (Leah Moore + John Reppion & Shawn McManus + J.H. Williams III; *WildStorm)* What has The Dog Man done to Rosa's mom and baby brother? Intent on revenge, Rosa rushes into an encounter with him without considering that the animals aren't all on her side. $2.99

Marvel

Black Panther 2 *(Who is the Black Panther?* 2 of 6; Reginald Hudlin & John Romita Jr; *Marvel Knights)* The Black Panther's origin is retold in a cinematic scope with all-out action. $2.99

District X #11 (David Hine & Lan Medina; *Marvel Knights)* It all hits the fan for Bishop and crew as the creature that lives under District X finally sets his eyes on slaughter. $2.99

Essential Doctor Strange Vol 2 (Roy Thomas & Dan Adkins + Gene Colan; tpbk) Collects Doctor Strange #169-178 and #180-183, Avengers #61, Sub-Mariner #22, Marvel Feature #1, Incredible Hulk #126, and Marvel Premiere #3-10 and #12-14. 608pg $16.99

Fantastic Four Visionaries: John Byrne Vol 4 (John Byrne; tpbk) Featuring the trial of Reed Richards – and introducing the newest member of the Fantastic Four. Collects Fantastic Four #258-267, Alpha Flight #4 and Thing #10. 288pg $24.99

Gambit 8 *(Voodoo Economics* 2 of 2; John Layman & Georges Jeanty) Gambit may be the only person who can save the city from an undead apocalypse, but he's got bigger problems at the moment: two women, both heartbroken, both angry, and both demanding his head on a platter. $2.99

one-shot **Gambit: House of Cards** (John Layman & Georges Jeanty; tpbk) Ever wonder what Gambit gets up to when he's not out saving the world with the X-Men? Collects Gambit #1-6. 144pg $14.99

new **Inhumans Vol 1: Culture Shock Digest** (Sean McKeever & Matthew Clark) What happens when the Inhumans' king decides to send some of his subjects to Earth to learn about humans? Collects Inhumans #1-6. 144pg $7.99

new **Mary Jane: Homecoming** 1 (Sean McKeever & Takeshi Miyazawa) It seems MJ is finally over Spider-Man and excited to go to Homecoming with Harry Osborn. $2.99

New Thunderbolts 6 (of 6; Fabian Nicieza & Tom Grummett) How can the new T-Bolts become Earth's Mightiest Heroes if half the team would rather sit the fight out in a bar? .. $2.99

Punisher 18 *(Mother Russia* 6 of 6, Garth Ennis & Dougie Braithwaite; *Max Comics)* It's missiles over Moscow as Frank Castle looks to destroy a deadly retrovirus buried deep in the bowels of a Russian missile silo. Mature. ... $2.99

one-shot **Spider-Man Team-Up Special!** (Todd Dezago & Shane Davis) With pollution on the rise, there's only one person with the strength and fortitude to stand up for the environment – and his name is... Mole Man... ..... $2.99

Ultimate X-Men 57 (Brian K. Vaughan & Stuart Immonen) The X-Men lead a desperate assault to rescue their kidnapped teammate in Mojo's citadel in the heart of the island Krakoa. ... $2.25

Ultimates 2 #4 (Mark Millar & Bryan Hitch) S:H.I.E.L.D. is convinced that Thor is a former mental patient who's far too dangerous to be loose $2.99

new **Wolverine: Soultaker** 1 (Akira Yoshida & Shin Nagasawa) Do you like Ninjas? Do you like zombies? Do you like Wolverine? Would you like to see Wolverine fight ninjas and zombies? $2.99

X-Men: Age of Apocalypse 2 (of 5; Akira Yoshida & Chris Bachalo) Apocalypse has been destroyed; the end of the world has been averted. Or has it? $2.99

new **X-Men: The End – Heroes And Martyrs** 1 (Chris Claremont & Sean Chen) The Xavier Academy has been reduced to a crater in a brutal sneak attack, and the casualties number in the hundreds. $2.99

X-Men/Fantastic Four 4 (Akira Yoshida & Pat Lee) It's an alien invasion as the Brood crash-land in the middle of Times Square, and only the combined might of the X-Men and Fantastic Four have any chance of stopping them! $3.50

ON SALE FROM

MARCH 16

Dark Horse

Damn Nation 2 (of 3; Andrew Cosby & J. Alexander) The cure to the vampire plague lies in the middle of the undead nation, and the scientists need military help to get it out. $2.99

new **Star Wars: General Grievous** 1 (of 4; Chuck Dixon & Rick Leonardi + Mark Pennington) On a rescue mission to Vandos, Padawan Flynn Kybo and his master T'chooka D'oon come face to face with one of the leaders of the Separatist army, General Grievous. $2.99

DC Comics

Adventures of Superman 638 (Greg Rucka & Matthew Clark + Andy Lanning) Mr Mxyzptlk returns, and when he hears Lois make a wish, he gives the Super-couple just what they want. $2.50

Angeltown 5 (of 5; Gary Phillips & Shawn Martinbrough; *Vertigo)* With all the key players in place and the clock ticking, it's now up to Nate Hollis to make sure The Magician will live to see tomorrow. $2.99

The Batman Strikes! 7 (Bill Matheny & Christopher Jones + Terry Beatty) Mr Freeze wants a piece of Gotham City all to himself. $2.25

Birds of Prey 80 (Gail Simone & Ed Benes) It's the final showdown between the Birds and Thorn in the conclusion of *Hero Hunters.* $2.50

new **Blood of the Demon** 1 (John Byrne + Will Pfeifer & Byrne + Bud LaRosa) Etrigan is on a rampage in Gotham City, where a nameless villain needs him to open a portal to another dimension...and will torture Jason Blood endlessly to make Etrigan his slave! $2.50

Illuminations

Highlights from March's releases

Selected by Martin "Biff" Averre

DARK Horse, home to many an unusual title and many an obvious movie tie-in, has (to my mind) one of the greatest off beat/weird humour comics of all time, **Sock Monkey** in which Tony Millionaire crafts tales of insanity, weirdness and whimsy all about a stuffed sock. His layouts are inspired and you never know what to expect from one book to another. In the first book (**The Adventures of T. Millionaire's Sock Monkey**) the gas fired chandelier caused the whole house to burn down and they all died. Not that their death ever stops them returning for the next story. Not a monthly comic but the occasional hardcover, this latest book runs to 40 pages in glorious colour entitled **That Darn Yarn**. This book uses yet another innovative layout in a story that has no ending or beginning and at only $7.95 or about £5.50 this is excellent value and demands to be re-read as there are so many levels on which it works. Demand this from your local retailer or mail order supplier now. **Sales 4/5 Quality 5/5**

Last year's **Identity Crisis** series was one of DC's biggest hits with the early issues going to several prints. Now, according to the blurb, if you've been wondering where the people who delivered **Identity Crisis** could possibly be going next, you will not want to miss **Countdown**. Whether it is what the blurb claims or not, I still wouldn't want to miss the first issue as it will run 80 pages for only 75p. With Geoff Johns, Greg Rucka and Judd Winnick scripting and five top artists delivering five chapters this will be too good to miss. If any if those who moan that comics are too expensive don't buy this one then I will never listen to them again. DC leads the way in low-priced lift offs to series and this one will be its best yet. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

Once again the Ultimate line is Marvel's big gun. Another award-winning (Hugo and Nebula) author comes on board – Orson Scott Card – to script **Ultimate Iron Man**. All I know is it's drawn by Andy Kubert and, oh yes, it has Ultimate in the title. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

The second top Marvel seller will be **Ultimate Secret**, now subtitled the second in a trilogy of Ultimate mini-series by Warren Ellis. The first was of course **Ultimate Nightmare** which has proven to be a huge success. **Ultimate Secret** sees the introduction of The Kree and Captain Mahr Vehl – Jim Starlin will be turning in his cosmic writer's chair. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

Marvel's big event is the return to *The Age Of Apocalypse* which sees a oneshot simply titled **X-Men Age Of Apocalypse One Shot**, cafchy eh? Then follows a weekly, yes weekly, five issue mini series **X-Men Age Of Apocalypse**, another title which does exactly what it says on the can. The mini-series is written by Akira Yoshida with art by the ever-popular Chris Bachalo and so will sell well and be eagerly awaited by many. The downside is, it is weekly, which means at least 25% of its potential readership will give it a miss, just plumping for the oneshot which will run 48 pages and contain four stories celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the original *Age Of Apocalypse.* You thought they were all dead? **Sales 4/5 Quality 5/5**

During 2004 the big surprise independent hit of the year was Zombie Attak Press, a self publisher from Lymington, Hampshire whose two comics about a zombie rabbit and his friend, **Mixy** #1-3 and **Our World** #1-3. For us they outsold even Amaze Ink's **Lenore and Squee**, selling over 30 copies of each issue. Retailers who want to enhance their lines should e-mail him on skinned_bunnies@yahoo.co.uk. Readers who want to see this item, pester your local retailer. This guy is good, British and publishes on schedule.

Catwoman 41 (Matteo Casali & Brad Walker + Jimmy Palmiotti) Catwoman realises a string of murdered prostitutes in the East End are illegal immigrants from Brazil. $2.50

Ex Machina 9 *(Tag* 4 of 5; Brian K. Vaughan & Tony Harris + Tom Feister; *WildStorm)* The true identity of the paranormal horror terrorising the subways of New York City is revealed. $2.99

new **The Human Race** 1 (of 7; Ben Raab & Justiniano + Walden Wong) The superpowered fraternity of Delta Chi Delta is charged with a mission: to protect the genetic code of the human race from any outside interference. $2.99

Human Target 20 *(The Stealer* 2 of 3; Peter Milligan & Cliff Chiang; *Vertigo)* It's a case of the great impersonator being impersonated as Chance heads to Texas to look for an old friend. .. $2.99

JLA 112 *(Syndicate Rules* 6 of 8; Kurt Busiek & Ron Garney + Dan Green) With the CSA wreaking havoc on Earth and the Qwardian menace devastating the galaxy, the JLA must divide their forces – and that means calling in help. $2.25

Lucifer 60 *(Breach* 2 of 3; Mike Carey & Peter Gross + Ryan Kelly; *Vertigo)* Jill Presto continues her journey through the desert to find the place where she will eventually give birth and has a strange evening with a cryptic guide. $2.50

one-shot **Mad About the Nineties** (The Usual Gang of Idiots; tpbk) A MAD look back at the past decade as seen through the twisted eyes of America's foremost satire magazine. 288pg b&w $9.99

Manhunter 8 (Marc Andreyko & Jesus Saiz + Jimmy Palmiotti) A familiar team of assassins and a nosy reporter are about to hand Manhunter her biggest challenge yet. $2.50

one-shot **Miss: Better Living Through Crime** (Philippe Thirault & Marc Riou + Mark Vigouroux) When their paths cross and their options run out, Nola and Slim forge a partnership as murderers for hire. 192pg $19.99

Ocean 5 (Warren Ellis & Chris Sprouse + Karl Story; *WildStorm)* UN weapons inspector Nathan Kane comes face-to-face with the truth of what lies submerged in stasis under the icy dome of Europa's Ocean $2.99

Plastic Man 15 (Kyle Baker) Spotlighting the hero who can stretch into any shape imaginable. $2.99

Powerpuff Girls 60 (Ivan Velez Jr & Christopher Cook + Mike DeCarlo) Townsville's little library becomes a battlefield as the stars of the Girls' favourite books come to rampaging life! $2.25

The Question 5 (Rick Veitch & Tommy Lee Edwards) Murder is the order of the day as the noose the Subterraneans are drawing around the Question's neck is tightening – and all roads lead to the Science Spire! $2.99

Space Ghost 5 (Joe Kelly & Ariel Olivetti) Space Ghost's former mentor in the Commandment has formed a pact with Zorak and his race! T $2.99

one-shot **Starman: Sons of the Father** (James Robinson & Peter Snejbjerg) Collecting Starman #75-80! After a meeting with Superman and a final talk with his brother David, Jack must uncover the mystery of the Starman of 1951. 160pg $14.99

Superman/Batman 19 (Jeph Loeb & Ian Churchill + Norm Rapmund) Now that Kara Zor-El has accepted her role as Supergirl, what will she do with it? $2.99

new **Sword of the Dark Ones** Vol 1 (Yasui Kentaro & Kotobuki Tsukasa) Monsters known as the Dark Ones roam the land of Barnard, killing indiscriminately. Leroy Schvartzer has struck out on his own with a mission to accomplish. 204pg b&w $9.99

Teen Titans 22 *(Lights Out* 2 of 3; Geoff Johns & Mike McKone + Marlo Alquiza) Doctor Light has forced the Titans' hand and staged a publicised battle with the young heroes to take back his reputation. $2.50

Wonder Woman 214 *(Truth or Dare* 2 of 2; Greg Rucka & Drew Johnson + Ray Snyder) The Cheetah has joined forces with Flash-foe Zoom, and the need for speed has turned her into an even deadlier threat for Wonder Woman. $2.25

Marvel

Avengers Assemble Vol 2 (various; hbk) Slorenia is dead. And out of the flaming remnants of this tiny Baltic state comes a message from its murderer: Mankind's days are numbered, because Ultron has returned! Collects Avengers #12-22, #0 and Annual 1999. 336pg $29.99

Cable/Deadpool 13 *(A Murder in Paradise* 1 of 2; Fabian Nicieza & Patrick Zircher) With Cable recuperating on his island haven of Providence, who else can investigate when there is a murder in paradise? $2.99

Exiles 61 *(Son of Apocalypse* 2 of 2; Tony Bedard & Jim Calafiore) Can the Exiles stop fighting amongst each other long enough to complete their new assignment–killing the X-Men? $2.99

Fantastic Four: Foes 3 (Robert Kirkman & Cliff Rathburn) Reed's plot continues as he and the Fantastic Four hunt down and neutralise the FF's most prominent villains. $2.99

Incredible Hulk 79 (Peter David & Lee Weeks) Is General Ross truly the mastermind behind the mysteries of the Island? Is the Hulk really having a toe-to-toe smackdown with one of the most legendary monsters in the history of Marvel? $2.99

Marvel Knights 4 #16 (Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa & Jim Muniz; *Marvel Knights)* With the Fantastic Four lost in time – and desperately trying to get back to the present to stop Ramades – the mad conqueror's tide of destruction begins! $2.99

Marvel Masterworks: The Fantastic Four Vol 8 (Stan Lee & Jack Kirby) Featuring the Silver Surfer pursued by none other than the world-devouring Galactus; the FF vs Spidey, DD and Thor in a barnstorming brouhaha; and a shedload more. Collects Fantastic Four (Vol 1) #72-81 and Annual #6. 272pg $49.99

New Invaders 8 (Allan Jacobsen & C.P Smith) Captain America and the New Invaders journey to the frozen north to prevent the fulfilment of an ancient Atlantean prophecy that will sink the entire surface world beneath the waves! $2.99

Runaways 2 (of 6; Brian Vaughan & Adrian Alphona) The Runaways always thought they were the only children of supervillains in Los Angeles, but it turns out they're not alone. $2.99

Spider-Man/Human Torch 3 (Dan Slott & Ty Templeton) Two teenagers hanging out in the garage, building a car from scratch. They're putting together a Spider-Mobile. $2.99

Spider-Man Unlimited 8 (Joe Hill + Joshua Ortega & Seth Fisher + Ryan Sook) A band of amateur filmmakers set out to duplicate the wall-crawler's fantastic feats. $2.99

Stormbreaker: The Saga of Beta Ray Bill 3 (Michael Oeming & Andrea Di Vito) Beta Ray Bill and Stardust clash like the titans they are, shaking the very heavens. $2.99

one-shot **Ultimate Nightmare** (Warren Ellis & Trevor Hairsine; tpbk) *See Close-Up, below.*

Ultimate Spider-Man 74 *(Hobgoblin* 3 of 6; Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley) The newly returned Harry Osborn comes between Peter and Mary Jane and may actually cause their breakup. $2.25

Uncanny X-Men 457 (Chris Claremont & Alan Davis) The X-Men discover a wondrous and advanced new civilisation, but it's none too friendly toward humans – or mutants. ... $2.25

Wolverine 26 *(Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* 1 of 6; Mark Millar & John Romita Jr; *Marvel Knights)* As the X-Men mourn their fallen team-mate in a funeral befitting a hero, Hydra celebrates the coronation of a new leader. $2.25

X-Men: Age of Apocalypse 3 (of 5; Akira Yoshida & Chris Bachalo) Sinister has just unleashed a massive force unseen, unrivalled, and unbeatable. Magneto and the X-Men's only hope lies in tracking down a retired Weapon X. $2.99

Young Avengers 2 (Allan Heinberg & Jim Cheung) Captain America, Iron Man, and Jessica Jones learn the secret origin of Iron Lad. $2.99

ON SALE FROM

MARCH 23

Dark Horse

Conan 14 (Kurt Busiek & Cary Nord + Thomas Yeates) Thoth-amon, the legendary sorceror who will plague Conan throughout his life, launches his first attack. $2.99

Concrete: The Human Dilemma 4 (of 6; Paul Chadwick) While an unsettling figure studies the controversial population-control campaign, Concrete's message becomes exaggerated, distorted, and parodied. Mature readers. b&w ... $3.50

The Goon 11 (Eric Powell) Dr Hieronymous Alloy begins to break down – literally. His metallic skin is beginning to oxidise and he may rust over and die. $2.99

DC Comics

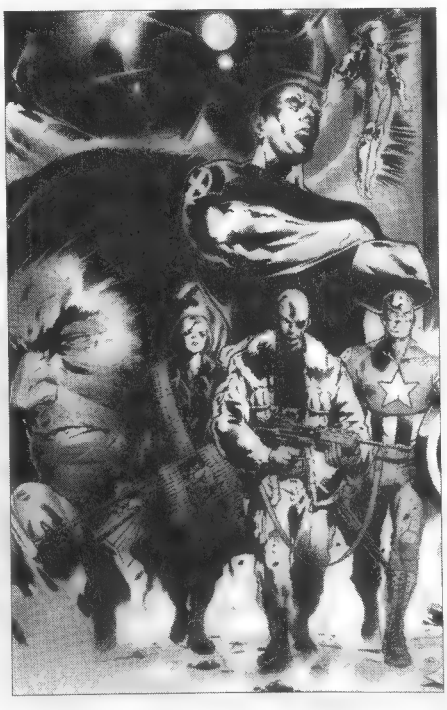
Adam Strange 7 (Andy Diggle & Pascal Ferry) Adam is joined by intergalactic lawmen the Darkstars to discover what happened to the planet Rann...a mystery that may lead to a new Rann/Thanagar war. $2.99

The Authority: Revolution 6 (Ed Brubaker & Dustin Nguyen + Richard Friend; *WildStorm)* Last issue, the seemingly unthinkable happened. Now the members of the Authority must contend with the fallout. $2.99

new **Batman Chronicles** Vol 1 (Bill Finger + Gardner Fox & Bob Kane + Jerry Robinson) Reprints Batman stories from Detective Comics #27-37 and Batman #1. 192pg . $14.99

Batman: Gotham Knights 63 (A.J Lieberman & Al Barrionuevo + Bit) A mysterious group continues to pursue Ivy's orphans while Batman debates the possibility of Ivy's innocence with Alfred. $2.50

The Books of Magick: Life During Wartime 9 (Si Spencer + Neil Gaiman & Dean Ormston; *Vertigo)* Tim overestimates his magical powers, which prove deadly at the siege at Krakow. $2.50



close-up

Ultimate Nightmare

Marvel

Writer: *Warren Ellis*

Artist: *Trevor Hairsine*

As world communications systems break down, the source of the anomaly is revealed as Tanguska, Russia. Nick Fury of SHIELD leads a force comprising Captain America, Black Widow and Sam Wilson to investigate while, simultaneously, Charles Xavier dispatches Jean Grey, Wolverine and Colossus. Collects Ultimate Nightmare #1-5. 10pg $11.99

ON SALE MARCH 16

Cartoon Network Block Party 7 (various) Monsters overrun the beach when Dexter's formula gets mixed up with the fixins at a family picnic. $2.25

one-shot **Fragile** (Stefano Raffaele) While on the run from zombie hunters, Alan finds the beautiful but decomposing girl of his dreams. 176pg $19.99

Green Lantern: Rebirth 6 (Geoff Johns & Ethan Van Sciver + Prentiss Rollins) The heroes of the DCU are split, and it may mean doom for some – unless Hal Jordan can lead them to victory. $2.99

Hawkman 38 (Justin Gray + Jimmy Palmiotti & Dale Eaglesham + Wade von Grawbadger) Badly wounded and lying in a medication-induced coma, Hawkman is visited by his previous incarnations. $2.50

Hellblazer 206 (Mike Carey & Giuseppe Camuncoli + Lorenzo Ruggiero; *Vertigo)* After his demon kids wipe out his friends and family, John prepares for a high-stakes ritual that he hopes will repair some of the damage. $2.75

JLA Classified 5 *(I Can't Believe it's not the Justice League* 2 of 6; Keith Giffen + J.M. DeMatteis & Kevin Maguire + Josef Rubinstein) Mary Marvel moves in with Fire; Blue Beetle and Booster Gold try to recruit Power Girl; and Mary learns all about Guy Gardner. .. $2.99

one-shot **Judge Dredd: Dredd vs Death** (John Wagner + Alan Grant & Brian Bolland; tpbk) When Judge Death comes to Mega-City One, it will take all of Dredd's ingenuity to stop him. 112pg b&w $12.99

Legend 2 (of 4; Howard Chaykin & Russ Heath; *WildStorm)* Hugo Danner's powers are both a blessing and a curse a fact that becomes more apparent as he reaches his adolescent years! 48pg $5.99

Nightwing 106 (Chuck Dixon + Scott Beatty & Scott McDaniel + Andy Owens) Alfred's been captured by Killer Croc, and only Dick Grayson can save him. And when the dust settles, Nightwing must deal with the one man who may not want him around: Batman. $2.25

new **The Razor's Edge: Redbird** 1 (of 5; Jason Pearson + Ed Brubaker & Pearson; *WildStorm)* Nataly Lakota is trying to piece her life back together amidst drug dealers and gang wars. $2.99

Robin 136 (Bill Willingham & Pop Mahn + Sandra Hope) He is a pale and ghostly figure who rides a horse made of living shadow. He is a bringer of death to all who face him. He is the Dark Rider – and he is coming for Robin. $2.25

new **Seven Soldiers: Guardian** 1 (Grant Morrison & Cameron Stewart) After the accidental shooting of a child, ex-cop Jim Harper tries to get his life in gear by applying for the job of The Guardian. $2.99

Sleeper Season Two 10 (Ed Brubaker & Sean Phillips; *WildStorm)* The games unravel as Lynch and Grifter uncover the truth. With Grifter gunning for revenge, has Holden finally been hung out to dry by the one person he still trusts? $2.99

Superman 215 (Brian Azzarello & Jim Lee + Scott Williams) Nothing can prepare the Man of Steel for the deadly foe he must face - and destroy! $2.50

Trigger 4 (Jason Hall & John Watkiss; *Vertigo)* Life used to be so simple for Carter Lennox, but after a series of odd (and sometimes deadly) occurrences around him, he's no longer certain what to expect of the Ethicorp-run world. $2.99

Marvel

Amazing Spider-Man 518 (J. Michael Straczynski & Mike Deodato + Mark Brooks) Throughout the years, there's always been one place that Peter Parker

could turn to seek refuge from the storm – he's always had Aunt May's home in Queens. Until now, that is. . . . $2.25

Araña 3 (of 6; Fiona Avery & Roger Cruz) Anya's newest enemy, Amun, is a deadly assassin... and he's infiltrated her high school! $2.99

Astonishing X-Men 10 *(Dangerous* 4 of 6; Joss Whedon & John Cassaday) A familiar face returns to the pages of Astonishing X-Men just as things take a turn for the worse. $2.99

Daredevil 71 (Brian Michael Bendis & Alex Maleev; *Marvel Knights)* Exactly what happened during Daredevil's year-long reign as the new Kingpin? $2.99

Excalibur 11 (Chris Claremont & Aaron Lopresti) Callisto answers a cry for help from Warren Worthington. But Callisto and Warren have some pretty unpleasant history between them. $2.99

Fantastic Four 524 (Mark Waid & Mike Wieringo) The team is rocked one final time. If you're hungry for one last jaw-dropping plot twist, here it is. $2.99

Livewires 2 (Adam Warren & Rick Mays) At 30,000 feet or on the sea floor, the Livewires have an exciting but essentially suicidal line of work $2.99

new NEW **Marvel Masterworks: Golden Age Captain America** Vol 1 (Joe Simon & Jack Kirby; hbk) Re masters and restores the first four issues of Captain America from 1941 264pg $49.99

New X-Men 11 *(Too Much Information* 2 of 2; Nunzio DeFilippis + Christina Weir & Paco Medina) David Alleyne has realised the full potential of his powers. But could it cost him his friends? $2.99

one-shot **Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe: X-Men – Age of Apocalypse 2005** (Mike Raicht) Official Handbook includes in-depth bios on more than 40 denizens of the Age of Apocalypse – from Abyss to Weapon X! 48pg . $3.99

Rogue 9 (Tony Bedard & Karl Moline) As Rogue and Sunfire search for the villains who dishonoured Sunfire's family name and tried to kill Rogue, the Silver Samurai is making his move – to take over the Yakuza. $2.99

new **Spellbinders** 1 (Mike Carey & Mike Perkins) When 15-year old Kim Vesco moves from Chicago to Salem she finds that the local student body is divided into rival factions of witches and non-witches, with both sides bidding for her allegiance. $2.99

Spider-Girl Vol 3: Avenging Allies Digest (Tom DeFalco & Pat Olliffe) Mayday Parker faces defeat and disgrace at the hands of Darkdevil, the Avengers and the man named Kaine! Collects Spider-Girl #12-16 and Spider-Girl 1999 Annual. 152pg $7.99

Supreme Power 16 (J. Michael Straczynski & Gary Frank; *Max Comics)* The most powerful team on the face of the earth starts to take shape. ... $2.99

Ultimate Spider-Man Vol 12: Superstars (Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley; tpbk) As Spidey and Logan struggle to get to the bottom of a mystery, their lives unravel. Collects Ultimate Spider-Man #66-71. 144pg $12.99

new **Wolverine Classic** Vol 1 (Chris Claremont & John Buscema, tpbk) The feral X-Man adopts his Patch identity in Madripoor as he tries to track down the mystical Black Sword of legend. Collects #1-5. 120pg . $12.99

Wolverine: Soultaker 2 (Akira Yoshida & Shin Nagasawa) Do you like Ninjas? Do you like zombies? Do you like Wolverine? Would you like to see Wolverine fight ninjas and zombies? $2.99

X-Men 168 (Peter Milligan & Salvador Larroca) A strange madness is striking mutants in Los Angeles, driving them to commit unspeakable acts. $2.25

close-up

Last Train to Deadsville: A Cal McDonald Mystery

Dark Horse

Writer: Steve Niles

Artist: Kelley Jones

Supernatural private eye Cal McDonald thinks he's seen it all, at least until a couple of rampaging rednecks burst through his door hootin' about demonic possessions. So begins a chilling case as those Beverly Hellbillies takes him down a trail of terror into a Southern California backwater. Collects the four-issue miniseries. 144pg $14.95

ON SALE MARCH 30

X-Men: Age of Apocalypse 4 (of 5; Akira Yoshida & Chris Bachalo) Sinister has just unleashed a massive force unseen, unrivalled, and unbeatable. Magneto and the X-Men's only hope lies in tracking down a retired Weapon X. $2.99

ON SALE FROM

MARCH 30

Dark Horse

B.P.R.D.: The Dead 5 (of 5; Mike Mignola + John Arcudi & Guy Davis + Dave Stewart) Johann, possessed by the ghosts of the Nazi scientists, struggles to stop the madman who's recovered the Spear of Destiny. $2.99

The Chronicles of Conan Vol 7: The Dweller in the Pool and Other Stories (Roy Thomas & John Buscena; tpbk) Conan crosses swords with many colourful and dangerous characters, somehow always finding himself on the wrong end of a wizard's wrath, or staring down the hungry jaws of a nightmarish beast. 160pg . $15.95

one-shot **Last Train to Deadsville: A Cal McDonald Mystery** (Steve Niles & Kelley Jones; tpbk) *See Close-Up, above.*

Magnus, Robot Fighter 4000 AD Vol 2 (various; tpbk) Russ Manning brought fans his *Tarzan of the Future* in Magnus, Robot Fighter. This volume collects issues #8-14 of the 1964-66 series. 200pg $49.95

one-shot **The Nail** (Steve Niles + Rob Zombie & Nat Jones + Jay Fotos; tpbk) Rex Hauser is a lone man fighting for the survival of his loved ones in a no-holds-barred standoff against the forces of Hell itself! Collects the miniseries. 96pg $12.95

one-shot **Spyboy: Final Exam** (Peter David & Pop Mhan + Norman Lee; tpbk) SpyBoy comes face to face with his greatest challenges ever – his senior prom, his graduation from high school, and the long-awaited revelation of the truth about his mother! 96pg $12.95

Star Wars: Empire Vol 4 – The Heart of the Rebellion (various; tpbk) Following Leia from the weeks just before the events in *A New Hope*, to the time just before *The Empire Strikes Back*. Collects the Star Wars: Valentine one-shot, plus issues #5-6 and #20-22 of the Empire series. 152pg $17.95

Star Wars: Obsession 5 (Haden Blackman & Brian Ching) On the bleak cemetery world of Boz Pity, the Jedi fight what they hope will be a decisive battle against the Separatists. $2.99

Star Wars: Republic 75 (John Ostrander & Jan Duursema + Dan Parsons) General Oppo Rancisis fears he will not have the forces to prevent Dark Jedi Sora Bulq from taking the Morgukai Shadow army off-world to threaten the galaxy. $2.99

Super Manga Blast! 50 (various) With an alien menace still on Earth, the Cannon God Exaxxion team plans its next move, while UN superagents battle meta-human terrorists in seraphic feather b&w 128pg $5.99

Usagi Yojimbo 83 (Stan Sakai) Begins a multipart story with the discovery of gold in a mountain range. The hunter who finds it is captured and tortured by a power-hungry lord, but the gold technically lies in the neighbouring Province. b&w .. $2.99

DC Comics

Batman 638 (Judd Winick & Doug Mahnke and Tom Nguyen) The Red Hood is revealed! With the murderous Black Mask controlling the Gotham City underworld, what role will this villainous addition to Batman's Rogues Gallery have? $2.25

Batgirl 62 (Andersen Gabrych & Alé Garza + Jesse Delperdang) Beaten, burned and on the brink of annihilation, Batgirl finds herself caught between life and death. $2.50

Catwoman: When in Rome 6 (of 6; Jeph Loeb & Tim Sale) Selina's heading back to Gotham City, but not before she deals with the betrayals and truths she's uncovered. $3.50

new **DC Countdown** 1 (various) Artists Morales, Benes, Reis, Jimenez and Saiz each pencil chapters of a story that follows a member of the JLA through a mystery that touches on nearly every character in the DCU. 80pg $1.00

new **The Devil Does Exist** Vol 1 (Takanashi Mitsuba) Things get bad when Kayano's mother gets engaged to Takeru's father, the school principal! 192pg b&w $9.99

Doom Patrol 10 (John Byrne & Byrne + Doug Hazlewood) While the Chief seeks to cure Metamorpho of his powers, Nudge and Vortex continue their quest to rescue Grunt from his captors and end up on the run from the authorities. $2.50

one-shot **El Nino** (Christian Perrissin & Boro Pavlovic; tpbk) Tells the odyssey of Vera, a young Red Cross delegate who goes in search of a brother whose existence she had ignored. 144pg $17.99

Elfquest Archives Vol 2 (Wendy Pini + Richard Pini & Wendy Pini; hbk) Issues #6-10 of the original ElfQuest comic are presented in this second hardcover volume. 228pg $49.95

Legion of Super-Heroes 4 (Mark Waid & Leonard Kirk + Dave Gibbons) The Invisible Kid's fateful decision inadvertently costs the Legion every bit of the good will the team has earned and radically endangers its future. 40pg $2.99

The Losers 22 *(London Calling* 3 of 3; Andy Diggle & Ben Oliver; *Vertigo)* When their plan to lift $100m from a rogue CIA operative blows up in their faces, the Losers confront the one man who knows all their dirty secrets. $2.99

one-shot **Majestic: Strange New Visitor** (Dan Abnett + Andy Lanning & Karl Kerschl) Including the *Strange New Visitor* storyline from Action Comics #811, Adventures of Superman #624, Superman #201 as well as the miniseries that returned the Kheran warrior to the WildStorm Universe. 168pg $14.99

new **Otherworld** 1 (Phil Jimenez & Jimenez + Andy Lanning; *Vertigo)* Into an idyllic, pastoral land populated by mythological beings is thrust a group of young people – some friends, some strangers – plucked from Earth and imbued with superpowers. 40pg .. $2.99

Outsiders 22 (Judd Winick & Carlos D'Anda) When Roy learns that someone on the team has betrayed them, he confronts the Dark Knight to learn the truth. . $2.50

Planetary Book 3: Leaving the 20th Century (Warren Ellis & John Cassaday; *WildStorm;* tpbk) Collects Planetary #13-18. Elijah takes a look at his past, making startling revelations and recounting his participation in the first moon shot... in 1851! 144pg $14.99

Richard Dragon 11 (Chuck Dixon & Scott McDaniel + Andy Owens) Richard Dragon and Lady Shiva battle legions of the damned in the fiery pits of hell with the fate of two lives and a soul in the balance. $2.50

one-shot **Slaine: Warrior's Dawn** (Pat Mills + Angie Kincaid & Massimo Belardinelli + Mike McMahon; tpbk) Young barbarian Slaine Mac Roth is a master of the warp-spasm, channelling the mystical power of the Earth to become a monstrous berserker! 200pg b&w $14.99

new **Superman: For Tomorrow** Vol 1 (Brian Azzarello & Jim Lee + Scott Williams; hbk) Collects Superman #204-209. A cataclysm has struck the Earth. Millions have vanished without a trace. No one is left unaffected – not even Superman! 160pg $24.99

Teen Titans Go! 17 (J. Torres & Mike Norton + Lary Stucker) Cyborg makes a containment suit that keeps Hot Spot's temperature and temper in check. But when a villain strikes, Hot Spot is completely useless. $2.25

final issue **The Witching** 10 (Jonathan Vankin & Leigh Gallagher + Dan Green; *Vertigo)* Elsa finally confronts the General, who has usurped the deadly cult started by Elsa's father. $2.99

Marvel

Captain America 5 (Ed Brubaker & Steve Epting + Michael Lark) The mystery heats up, as clues begin to fall into place. But are the secrets Cap is searching for buried in a long-forgotten Invaders mission from the Russian front? $2.99

Daredevil: Redemption 3 (David Hine & Michael Gaydos; *Marvel Knights)* Convinced that his client is innocent of the brutal, ritualistic killing of a local youth, attorney Matt Murdock now faces the legal battle of his career. $2.99

Iron Man 4 *(Extremis* 4 of 6; Warren Ellis & Adi Granov) Warren Ellis and Adi Granov continue their techno-noir thriller take on the armoured Avenger. . $2.99

one-shot **Madrox: Multiple Choice** (Peter David & Pablo Raimondi; tpbk) Reunites several of X-Factor's most popular and whimsical characters – Jamie Madrox, Wolfsbane, and Strong Guy – and sends them on an adventure of light and darkness. Collects Madrox #1-5. 120pg $13.99

Marvel Knights Spider-Man 12 (Mark Millar & Terry Dodson; *Marvel Knights)* Spider-Man versus two of his biggest – and most popular – foes, with MJ's life at stake! $2.99

one-shot **Marvel Milestone: Iron Man** (various) Features key reprints of your favourite Avengers; Iron Man, Ant Man and Captain America. 48pg $3.99

New Avengers 5 (Brian Michael Bendis & David Finch) The team has gathered and the true villain is revealed. $2.25

The Pulse 8 *(Secret War* 3 of 4; Brian Michael Bendis & Michael Lark). Jessica Jones is caught in a web of intrigue from which she can't escape and all she wants is Luke Cage back home safe! $2.99

Secret War 4 (of 5; Brian Michael Bendis & Gabriele Dell'Otto) The secret of Secret War hangs in the balance in the penultimate chapter. 48pg $3.99

Spectacular Spider-Man 26 *(Sins Remembered: Sarah's Story* 4 of 4; Samm Barnes & Scot Eaton) Peter learns the truth about Gwen Stacy's daughter Sarah as a deadly enemy strikes! $2.25

Ultimate Fantastic Four 17 (Warren Ellis & Adam Kubert) The Ultimate

Fantastic Four are about to have a nasty surprise when the deadly foes who inhabit this doomed universe decide to hitch a ride $2.25

new **Ultimate Secret** 1 (Warren Ellis & Steve McNiven) A hidden alien race is trying desperately to keep Man from reaching the stars. Cape Canaveral scientist Phillip Lawson knows of the hideous plan and will use all his considerable power to stop it...the power of Captain Mahr Veh!! ... $2.99

X-23 #4 *(Innocence Lost* 4 of 6; Christopher Yost & Billy Tan; *Marvel Knights)* X-23 has committed hundreds of assassinations, but now the one person who swore they would never treat X-23 like a weapon will send her on a personal mission. $2.99

X-Force: Shatterstar 2 (Rob Liefeld + Brandon Thomas & Marat Mychaels) Shatterstar and the mysterious prince attack a Madripoor nightclub where they encounter the bodyguards of a familiar six-armed sorceress. $2.99

new **X-Force & Cable Vol 1: The Legend Returns** (Fabian Nicieza & Rob Liefeld; tpbk) Cable, Domino, Cannonball, Shatterstar, Warpath and all the rest are back! Collects X-Force 1-6. 144pg $14.99

X-Men: Age of Apocalypse 5 (of 5, Akira Yoshida & Chris Bachalo) Apocalypse has been destroyed; the end of the world has been averted. Or has it? Sinister has just unleashed a massive force unseen, unrivalled, and unbeatable. Magneto and the X-Men's only hope lies in tracking down a retired Weapon X. $2.99

X-Men: Phoenix – Endsong 4 (Greg Pak & Greg Land) Dark Phoenix can eat stars and destroy galaxies. The X-Men must stop her, once and for all, but can Scott Summers deliver the final blow? $2.99

RELEASED AND ON SALE IN

MARCH

Amaze Ink/ Slave Labor

Autumn 3 (Tommy Kovac) Autumn, the mysterious girl from parts unknown, is attempting to become assimilated into the small village, despite her strange powers, and her unwillingness to cover her face in public. 24pg b&w $2.95

Filler Bunny 3 (Jhonen Vasquez) Adventures to test the tolerance levels of even the most monstrous of comic fans. $2.95

Gloomcookie 23 (Serena Valentino & Harley Sparx) With Sebastian and the monster dead, there seems to be little hope that Vincent and the Carnival Macabre members will survive their battle against Marguerite. Mature readers. 24pg b&w $2.95

Little Scrowlie 9 (Todd Meister & Jennifer Feinberg) Led by the Brave One, the cats return to the surface world and commence their long-overdue naps. 24pg b&w $2.95

Next Exit 3 (Christy Lijewski) When a mysterious woman from Markesh's past appears, Retrab begins to question how much she actually knows about her partner. 24pg b&w $2.95

Nightmares & Fairy Tales 12 (Serena Valentino) Catherine is being haunted by a woman who was mysteriously murdered and her ghost is causing her to lose her mind. Mature readers. 24pg b&w $2.95

one-shot **Seasmonsters & Superheroes** Vol 1 (Scott Mills; tpbk) Collects the eight issues of the series, ever controversial. 144pg b&w $14.95

Serenity Rose 6 (Aaron A) Join our drowsy young heroine as she searches the Inconsolablw Wood in search of her own deadly nocturnal emissions. 24pg b&w $2.95

Street Angel 5 (Jim Rugg & Brian Maruca) Pinned down, back against the wall, flying lead everywhere, the situation looks grim, but the gunmen are going to learn, when you play with fire, you're going to get burned. 24pg b&w .. $2.95

Antarctic Press

Gold Digger 62 (Fred Perry) Array moves from her own jailbreak to busting out G'nolga, Hanza and her beloved Tirant from prison in the Retreat realm. $2.99

Heaven Sent 9 (Ben Dunn) Kyle's homecoming isn't what he expected – the Earth has totally changed in his absence. b&w $2.99

I Hunt Monsters Pocket Manga Vol 2 (Rod Espinosa & Craig Babiar) Able to summon the spirits of his magic-using ancestors, Will Warlock continues his fight to recapture the forces of the underworld. 144pg b&w $9.99

I Hunt Monsters Vol 2 #3 (Rod Espinosa & Wes Hartmann + Craig Babiar) To counter his enemy's supernatural martial arts prowess, Will summons the spirits of a samurai ancestor. b&w $2.99

Luftwaffe 1946 Vol 5 #1 (Ted Nomura & various) Hitler plans to attack the US from a staging base in South America, forcing the US to divert its military to meet the new challenge. b&w ... $5.95

Neotopia Pocket Manga Vol 3 (Rod Espinosa; tpbk) Still trying to keep ahead of pursuing Krossian forces, Nalyn's ship has crossed to the continent of Ar, where she and her crew meet new allies and enemies. 168pg $9.99

Ninja High School 126 (Robby Bevard & Katie Bair) The last of Katie Bair's run. The final chapter in the Wunan storyline ends with a big blow-out party, better known as Prom Night, wrapping up everyone's fates. b&w $2.99

Archie Comics

Archie 556 (various) To combat sagging grades, Archie makes Dilton his study buddy, hoping his good habits will rub off. $2.19

Archie & Friends 90 (Angelo DeCesare & Rex Lindsey) Stuck in traffic on his way to a personal appearance by teen pop star Allegra, Archie has no idea how close an encounter he'll have with her-until their car bumpers collide! $2.19

Betty & Veronica 207 (various) Can Veronica survive a fashion clash or will she once again set the trends? .. $2.19

Jughead 164 (Craig Boldman & Rex Lindsey) When Jughead decides to round up all the loose change around the house, it all adds up to more than he bargained for! $2.19

Sabrina the Teenage Witch 65 Sabrina must quietly stand by as Shinji and Llandra get chummy at charm school; next, she learns she's moving away... from the refuge of mortal school and her human heartthrob Harvey! $2.19

Sonic the Hedgehog 146 (The Good, the Bad and the Unknown: Ignition 2 of 4; various) One of the biggest, baddest battles ever just got even bigger and badder! Can Sonic and the rest of the freedom fighters stand up to this ultimate onslaught? $2.19

new **Tales from Riverdale Digest** 1 (various) Highlights the supporting cast of Archie, from Reggie and Moose to Sabrina and Josie, and every teen in between! $21.99

Veronica 160 (Dan Parent) Veronica meets a hunky guy and ends up going to the movies with him... not realising she's on a date with more than one guy! $2.19

Avatar Press

Brian Pulido's Medieval Lady Death 2 (Brian Pulido & Di Amorim) Lady Death and her injured mentor Wolfram von Bach are ambushed by the treacherous Greelum who are intent on possessing her magical sword Blackheart. $3.99

new **Brian Pulido's War Angel** 1 (Brian Pulido & Walter Geovani) War Angel, an amoral assassin-for-hire, is on the run and in desperate need of cash. She enters Sodom, a city controlled and divided by an imperialistic Warlock clan and a coven of sado-science worshiping vampires. b&w $3.50

Alan Moore's Hypothetical Lizard 4 (Alan Moore + Antony Johnston & Sebastian Fiumara) Foral Yatt is revealed as a chameleon, and Rawra Chin's fall from lofty grace is almost complete When the abused lover comes face to face with his own doom, he must make the biggest decision of his life should he leave, and lose Foral Yatt forever? b&w $3.50

Garth Ennis' 303 6 (of 6; Garth Ennis & Jacen Burrows) The anonymous Russian Colonel faces his final test but when he finds his victim in his sights, has he got what it takes to pull the trigger? Variant cover $3.99

new **Robocop: War Party** 1 (Steven Grant & Carlos Ferreira) New monthly miniseries. The only law left standing in Detroit, Robocop battles against revolutionaries bent on violently turning the city into an independent nation. ..... $3.99.

new **Stargate SG-1: Pow** Vol 1 (James Anthony & Renato Guedes + Jorge Correa; tpbk) SG1 leads the USAF effort to establish alliances with other races and find new technologies to be used against the ever present threat of the Goa'uld. Collects the three issue Stargate SG1: P.O.W. series and the original stories Know Your Enemy and First Prime. 96pg $13.99

Bongo Comics

Futurama/Simpsons Crossover Crisis 2 (Boothby & Lloyd) The Simpsons and Planet Express must work together to restore order and repair the gaping vortex in the side of New New York Library. $2.99

Simpsons Comics 104 (Boothby & Costanza) Who will fill the void and belly up to the bar when Duffman is no more? $2.99

Claypool

Elvira 143 (various) Elvira, Spooky Suzie, and Yvonne Lacey the lady werewolf are loosed into a fantastic garden maze and hunted like animals. b&w $2.50

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new **Deadbeats** 1 (various) Five fearsome newcomers arrive in Fear City, and their first outreach is to murder four teen-agers on the beach. b&w 160pg $12.95

Elvira Mistress of the Dark 2 (various; tpbk) As a new century beckons, it's time to think about what made the last one great, including this terrific selection of Elvira classics from the second year of her Claypool comic book series. b&w 152pg $12.95

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one-shot **Paul Moves Out** (Michael Rabagliati) Paul encounters another step into adulthood by moving out of home and into an apartment with his girlfriend. 120pg b&w $19.95

El Capitan

Stray Bullets 37 (David Lapham) Amy does something she's never done before – kills lots of people and saves a poor couple in distress. Mature readers b&w $3.50

Stray Bullets Vol 2: Somewhere Out West 10th Anniversary (David Lapham; tpbk) Makes up the second seven issues of Stray Bullets. This is a desert town whose inhabitants wait for the day an earthquake brings them beachfront property. Oh dear. 224pg b&w . $19.95

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one-shot **Anywhere But Here** (Tori Miki; graphic novel) Wordless comic strip with an unnamed lead character who works as a book shop owner, but somehow finds himself entangled with aliens, alternate realities, and so on. 96pg $12.95

Love & Rockets Vol 2 #13 (Los Bros Hernandez) Hoey prepares for her new career and must decide what to do for lunch eat in or go out? Mature readers. b&w $4.50

new **Modern Art** (ed Craig You; graphic novel) New journal devoted to the art of comics. Features material created especially for this title, plus classic material by Rude Goldberg, Jack Kirby, Hy Mayer and others. 128pg $19.95

Image

Amazing Joy Buzzards 4 (Mark Smith & Dan Hipp) The gang travels to Hollywood to shoot a film and transform the Amazing Joy Buzzards into screen icons b&w $2.95

Battle Hymn 4 (B. Clay Moore & Jeremy Haun + Dave Bryant) The gruesome murder of a hero and a cutting betrayal spark the beginning of the end. One hero departs in anger, one hero decides it's up to him to end the war alone and one is assigned to stop that from happening. $2.95

Battle of the Planets: Princess 6 (David Wohl & Wilson Tortosa) G-Force finally tracks down their youngest teammate, Keyop, at Zoltar's lair. 24pg b&w $2.99

Burglar Bill 4 (Paul Grist) When young Granville goes missing, Burglar Bill and PC Stephen Hill have to put aside their differences and search the sewers beneath the Blunkett Flats. b&w $2.95

Case Files: Sam & Twitch 18 *(Ancient Chinese Secret, Huh?* 5 of 6; Marc Andreyko & E.J. Su) Sam and Twitch have seen a lot during their careers, but nothing could have prepared them for this! b&w $2.50

one-shot **Darkness and Tomb Raider** 1 (Paul Jenkins + David Wohl & Jae Lee + Billy Tan) Paul Jenkins and Jae Lee explore Jackie Estacado in The Darkness Prelude, while David Wohl and Billy Tan chronicle a battle between the Darkness and Tomb Raider! $2.99

new **Deadworld** 1 (Gary Reed & Vince Locke) A group of teens, desperately looking for signs of civilization, not only have to hide from mindless zombie hordes, they must also contend with the intelligent, talking zombie overlords that seem to control and direct the flesh-eaters. b&w $3.50

Detonator 5 (Mike Baron & Gabe Elteab) Frank tumbles into the dark night of the human soul when he decides to assassinate a crooked senator. . $2.95

one-shot **Distant Soil: Coda** (Colleen Doran; tpbk) *See Close-Up on facing page.*

one-shot **86 Voltz: Dead Girl** (Bryan J.L. Glass + Michael Avon Oeming & Oeming) What will happen when little 86 throws down and mixes it up against a witch and her evil foetus? When black science and white magic clash in a spiritual free-for-all, the only result is pure chaos. 56pg b&w $5.95

Expatriate 2 (B. Clay Moore & Jason Latour) Jack finds himself below the border, bleeding and scrambling to stay ahead of Conrad and Murphy, CIA agents with blood on their itchy trigger fingers. $2.95

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Flight Vol 2 (ed Kazu Kibuishi; graphic novel) Tells all, from the fantasy of a fading childhood romance in a small seaside town to the tale of a pair of monster hunters looking to make a quick buck to the allegory of a young robot finding meaning in his disposal. 304pg $24.95

one-shot **Frankenstein Mobster Vol 1: Made Man** (Mark Wheatley; tpbk) Terry Todd fights for inner control against evil souls in a conflict that could take this corrupt, haunted city and dump it deeper into hell. Collects Frankenstein Mobster #0-7. 256pg $19.95

Freedom Force 3 (Eric Dieter & Tom Scioli) When Minuteman is arrested for crimes he didn't commit, it's up to the star-spangled squirt and his compatriots to clear their fearless leader's name before the city falls at the hands of Déjà Vu's deadly army of doppelgangers! $2.95

Hunter-Killer 2 (Mark Waid & Marc Silvestri + Joe B. Weems) Ellis joins the Hunter-Killer program in a desperate effort to make sense of his world. $2.99

new **Imaginaries** 1 (Ben Avery & Mike S. Miller + Gregory Titus) Join Superhero G as he explores this strange new world populated by imaginary figments of billions of children around the world. $2.95

Invincible 22 (Robert Kirkman & Ryan Ottley) Mark and Amber's relationship is heating up now that they are in college and away from the prying eyes of parental supervision. $2.95

Lions, Tigers & Bears 3 (Mike Bullock & Jack Lawrence) Stranded in

the Stuffed Animal Kingdom where his new toys have come to life, Joey just wants to get home again. $2.95

Lullaby: Wisdom Seeker 2 (Mike S Miller + Ben Avery & Hector Sevilla) Jim and Pinocchio continue their quest to Oz, when they are sidetracked by a band of religious zealots who kidnap Pinocchio! $2.95

one-shot **Negative Burn Winter 2005** (various) Merging genres, pushing boundaries and allowing top comic book talent to experiment with unique stories. 96pg b&w $9.95

Noble Causes 9 (Jay Faerber & Fran Bueno) She calls herself a superhero, but to Celeste, acquiring superpowers and putting on a costume were only a means to an end: fame. 28pg $3.50

new **Original Adventures of Cholly & Flytrap** 1 (Arthur Suydam) Original tales of Suydam's ultimate anti-heroes, Cholly and Flytrap, opening as the team becomes embroiled in a vicious battle on a stark alien landscape $3.50

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Pigtale 2 (Ovi Nedelcu) Boston Booth finds himself caught between rescue and retreat as he and Clyde try to avoid the claws of Taxx, Clyde's evil wolf stepbrother. b&w $2.95

PvP 16 (Scott R. Kurtz & Kurtz) The swords and sorcery are put aside for capes and tights as our favourite nerds assume the roles of the Justice Eight! b&w $2.95

Rex Mundi 13 (Arvid Nelson & Eric J + Jeromy Cox) Julien discovers a geometrical riddle hidden in plain sight on the streets of Paris. $2.95

Rex Mundi Vol 2: The River Underground (Arvid Nelson & Eric J + Jeromy Cox; tpbk) Doctor Julien Saunière investigates a conspiracy reaching up to the highest levels of government and stretching back to the walls of Jerusalem during the First Crusade. Collects Rex Mundi #6-11. 176pg $14.95

one-shot **Rising Stars: Fire And Ash** (J. Michael Straczynski & Brent Anderson + John Starr; tpbk) The final fate of the 113 Pederson Specials is revealed. 208pg ..... $29.95.

new **Sea of Red** 1 (Rick Remender + Kieron Dwyer & Salgood Sam) Marco Esperanza has spent the past 400 years clinging to life tied to the bow of a sunken vessel bubbling the briny. $2.95

Small Gods 8 (Jason Rand & Juan E. Ferreyra) In the aftermath of the chase, Bobby and Lucy narrowly escape their pursuers and seek refuge with the only person who can help them: the other woman! b&w $2.95

Spawn 144 (Brian Holguin + Todd McFarlane & Angel Medina + Danny Miki) As Spawn continues to deal with the rebellious witch Nyx and the newly freed Redeemer, he discovers that he may very well be the one who ends up paying. $2.50

Ultra 8 (Joshua Luna + Jonathan Luna & Jonathan Luna) Will Pearl find her true love? $2.95

Walking Dead 18 (Robert Kirkman & Charlie Adlard) Rick has gone over the edge. He's alienating everyone around him $2.95

one-shot **Wanted** (Mark Millar & J G. Jones + Paul Mounts; hbk) Mark Millar examines what happens when absolute power does corrupt absolutely, and everyman Wesley Gibson inherits incredible powers. Collects the Wanted #1-6, plus the informational Wanted Dossier. 192pg $29.99

Witchblade 84 *(Witch Hunt* 5 of 6; Ron Marz & Michael Choi + Sal Regla) With the gruesome fate of her partner Jake McCarthy still weighing heavily on her mind, Sara Pezzini girds herself for a final battle with ultimate evil as she heads north accompanied only by NYPD detective Patrick Gleason. $2.99

new **Witchblade And Tomb Raider** 1 (Mark Millar + Geoff Johns & Jae Lee + Mark Texiera) Sara Pezzini takes on a horrific serial killer in Witchblade: The Demon, while Lara Croft goes raiding in Tomb Raider: Scarface's Treasure. $2.99

new **Wood Boy** 1 (Raymond E. Feist + Sean J. Jordan & Mat Broome) The realm of Midkemia is under invasion as the Tsurani, strange invaders from an alien culture on another world, emerge from the rifts to conquer the land and seize its metals. $2.95

Moonstone

new **Grave Grrls: Destroyers of the Dead** 1 (Scott Licina & Ken Wolak) Something is bringing the dead back to life with an insatiable hunger for human flesh, and it's going to take three enhanced female government ops to solve the mystery. Mature. ... $3.50

one-shot **Jack Hagee Private Eye** (CJ Henderson & various; graphic novel) Three all-new stories of the mean streets around us today, plus the previously-published *The Little Voice Inside*. Mature readers. 96pg b&w $9.49

one-shot **Kolchak: The Night Stalker Eve of Terror** (Lord & Kazoll; graphic novel) Carl Kolchak is hot on the story of a scientist who is mysteriously murdered. 48pg $5.95

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one-shot **Awakening** (Neal Shaffer & Luca Genovese; graphic novel) Francesca, the only child of an affluent family, is excited to be attending boarding school. But, shortly after her arrival, one of her classmates is brutally murdered. Mature readers. 104pg b&w $9.95

new **Hysteria** Vol 1 (Mike Hawthorne) Tales of malicious madmen, courageous cops, charming chupacabras and more. Mature readers. 104pg b&w $9.95

Queen & Country Vol 4: Operation Blackwall (Greg Rucka & Jason Alexander) Tara Chace is accustomed to working in the shadows cast by world governments, but when a French conglomerate blackmails one of the Queen's most affluent subjects, Tara's espionage turn corporate. Mature readers. 96pg b&w $8.95

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Dogwitch 16 (Daniel Schaffer) Rising from the toxic pool of illumination only to discover that her Goblin birth party has been gate crashed by the sex doll cheerleaders, Dogwitch once again comes face to face with Elastic Head. Mature readers. 24pg $2.95

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new **Visitor** Vol 1 (various; graphic novel) Everyone Hyo-Bin has ever been close to has been murdered. She seems to have a horrifying supernatural ability. 192pg $9.99

INTERNATIONAL

Black Library

one-shot **Lord of the Night** (Simon Spurrier) The full horror of the Chaos Space Marines is revealed in this pulse-pounding sci-fi thriller. 416pg b&w £6.99

UK NEWSSTAND

DC Thomson

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Classics from the Comics 103 (various) Anthology reprinting classic cartoon strips from The Beano and The Dandy. 68pg b&w £1.20

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Fun-Size Beano 171-172 (fortnightly; various) Pocket-sized spin-off from the Beano featuring Dennis the Menace, and all the usual suspects. 68pg £0.60

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Essential X-Men 122 (four-weekly; Claremont + Morrison & various) Reprints the adventures of the New X-Men and Team X-Treme. 76pg .. £2.40

Marvel Rampage 5 (various) Two six-page strips per 44-page issue, starring such delights as Wolverine, the Hulk and the Fantastic Four. 44pg £1.75

Mighty World of Marvel 25 (four-weekly; various) Featuring Daredevil, Hulk, plus Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. 76pg £2.40

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Ultimate Spider-Man 39 (four-weekly; Bendis & Hairsine + Miki) A double helping of Ultimate Six, featuring The Ultimates and a clutch of Spidey's deadliest foes. 52pg £1.95

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Wolverine & Deadpool 109 (four-weekly; various) Current and classic solo Wolverine tales, now with added insanity from the Merc With The Mouth. .. £1.95

Rebellion

2000AD #1428-1432 (various) Russian rogue and wanted man Nikolai Dante meets up with an old love in desperate circumstances in *How Could You Believe Me?* £1.60

Judge Dredd Megazine 229 (various) Includes Judge Dredd in *Who? Dares Wins*, Shimura in *Deus X*, and Young Middenface in *Killoden*. 100pg £4.50

Striker 3D

Striker 76-79 (weekly; Pete Nash & various) Football comic starring ex-Sun newspaper Warbury Warriors. . £1.50

close-up

A Distant Soil: Coda

Image

Writer/Artist: Colleen Doran

A foiled coup attempt results in a power vacuum that leaves an alien world without its treasured weapon. The aliens have no choice but to take young Liana as their reluctant new Avatar. Only an angry slave and a small group of resistance fighters can free her and the universe from the dangers of her power. Collects portions of A Distant Soil #32-37. Includes a selection of previously unpublished art. 164pg b&w .. $17.95

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Comment

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Comment is a forum to enable fans and professionals alike to express their personal points of view on aspects of the comics industry. As such, the following opinions do not necessarily reflect those of this publication, but space will be given in subsequent issues to well-reasoned opposing views. Submissions are edited only for grammar, clarity and brevity.

Remembering Will Eisner

Comment by Charles Brownstein, Comic Book Legal Defense Fund

THE morning Will died, we all sat at our desks and stared blankly at our screens in a state of visceral shock. "What's shocking," someone said to me that morning "is that it's shocking. When an 87 year old man goes in for open heart surgery, of course this is a risk." But it is still shocking, both the man on the other end of the line and I admitted.

It's shocking because I think we all regarded Will as being so much more than a mere man. He was a giant, and his presence so overwhelming to those of us who followed him in dedicating our lives to this profession, that it is impossible to think of him in the past tense. Will was something of a spiritual guide – a courageous force that dedicated himself absolutely to the sequential art form and did so with a pride and seriousness that allowed those who followed to do the same.

Will, in a real sense, was the father of our country. He fought an overwhelming cultural resistance to viewing comics in a serious light by employing guerilla tactics that would have made Washington nod with appreciation. Creating *The Spirit* to address a diverse audience in the context of a newspaper was a masterstroke analogous to Washington's Christmas siege of the British. His decades creating educational, military and corporate comics allowed him to explore the limits and language of the art form while infiltrating the fields of endeavor that led American life.

While the comics business was trafficking in children's escapist fantasies, Will was using comics to teach GIs how to fix their trucks in a war zone. This use of comics was something like guerilla warfare, wearing down the skeptics about the seriousness and usefulness of this powerful language.

Like Madison contemplating the legal template of an ideal nation, Will carefully considered the grammar, characteristics and potential of comics. He went into the schools and taught the form and the business; he emphasized the field as a literary one at a time when the most pressing concern of a young artist was getting a job on **Spider-Man**. He pointed out that the art form did not need to bow to these costumes and their work-for-hire kings. He pointed out – this in the seventies! that we could be self-governors, that is, create content that is resonant as literature. He wrote the books on the craft, **Comics and Sequential Art**, and later **Graphic Storytelling**, which would allow a template for his successors to build upon.

But there was a mysticism to Will that made him also stand out like Moses. In the mid-seventies he believed that the medium was capable of a great deal more than it was accomplishing and so he set out to create **A Contract With God**. Many, many professionals have said to me that the publication of that book was a turning point in their lives. In the use of content, format and style, Will told a generation that they could consider themselves as authors and speak to the serious themes that authorship demands.

In the last decades of his astonishing life he pursued this path, creating nearly two dozen novels, some of which will surely be counted among the most enduring literature not only of this artform, but of the twentieth century as well.

It is a bitter irony that, like Moses, Will was in sight of his promised land when he died. In 1978 when **Contract** appeared, there was no possibility of a venerable literary house publishing a work of comics. But later this year, W.W. Norton, among the most venerated publishing houses, will be doing just that, and making **The Plot** their key offering for the season. While the economic implications of comics becoming a part of the serious publishing industry are debatable, it is not debatable that this was the serious treatment to which Will aspired, for himself, and for his chosen profession.

As a soul, Will was generous, ambitious, insightful and fair. He did not hesitate to give of himself in these last decades. A constant presence at conventions, Will made equal time for the captains of this industry, the aspirants looking to break in, and the fans whose lives he touched with his body of work. He was always a gentleman, in the classical sense, where the word actually means something beyond mere politeness.

I would wager that every person in this business has a personal story about Will. That fact alone is testimony of his core generosity. I,

luckily, can count myself among the lives that Will has touched. In my teens publishing a fan magazine, Will gave me time to interview him; and later to read and comment upon the work I was doing.

When I was a young man, he submitted to be interviewed by Frank Miller and myself, for a book discussing the art and commerce of this field. On that occasion he and his wonderful wife Ann invited us into their home and shared their time, memories, and insights unselfishly.

As a man, in my current occupation, I always found Will generous with his time, resources and creativity, assisting us in bolstering the vitality of the CBLDF.

My favorite memory of Will is a conversation not captured on tape between he, Frank and me, discussing the decline of masculinity. The truth is that men like Will Eisner are a rarity today. Seldom does one find such a wise and giving soul, passionately devoted to vocation, and above all else embodying a moral decency that held living a good life and doing no harm as its core values.

Of course we will miss Will. We already do. But to merely miss him is not enough to honor his memory. We must do our best, as he did for so many decades, to advance this artform, which he proved could be a life's work. Will led us to a fertile promised land. Now we must work that much harder to cultivate it properly. Thank you, Mr. Eisner.

But he would say that, wouldn't he?

Comment by David Robinson: david.robinson@idealshoppingdirect.co.uk

JOHN Sanders treads a veritable tubful of sour grapes in his review of Chris Donald's autobiography [**CI** #180]. While I respect John's experience in the comics field, I can't align myself with all of his comments.

Despite IPC's admirable set of traditional values, when the Donalds began **Viz** they were young, inexperienced and reacting to their own environmental set of parameters. They effectively (in both senses of the word) threw away the rulebook. John is not alone among publishers to suggest (and I'm paraphrasing) "**Viz** only sells because it's filthy". I didn't agree then, and I still don't.

I'm reminded of the time when Katy Boyle claimed on TV that Paul Gascoigne only achieved huge fame "because he cried". Gazza went mega, not only because he cried, but also because he was a damn' good footballer. In the same way, **Viz** in its heyday (note the past tense) was not only profane but was also very amusing (in fact, Paul Gravett writes in the same issue of **CI** that Donald's book is funny); usually well-perceived (an example is the Fat Slags episode in the Xmas 1989 **Viz**); and often well-drawn, within the confines of the UK comics genre.

Should we argue that some of the mag's better, funnier practitioners came on board after the initial **Viz** period, then we should also, by the same token, consider Matt Groening's enormous success from comparatively humble beginnings on *The Simpsons*.

The **Viz** team's lack of ability to produce material according to pre-conceived IPC standards should not be seen as blanket failure. Many have trodden this rejection path, and I don't recall Harry Enfield complaining when he asked the Donalds to help script B*ggerall Money, the Geordie antithesis of Loadsamoney. Should the **Viz** team really be expected to "spread their talents across a much broader spectrum of editorial ideas"? How many adventure strips did the acclaimed George Parlett draw?

Whenever I've written about **Viz**, I've always said that it attracts people who would not otherwise read comics, and alienates some who would. I've witnessed builders and van-drivers emerging from WH Smith with **Viz** tucked under-arm, but readership is not limited to that social stratum (for want of a better term) and I've seen a Doctor of Botany doing the same.

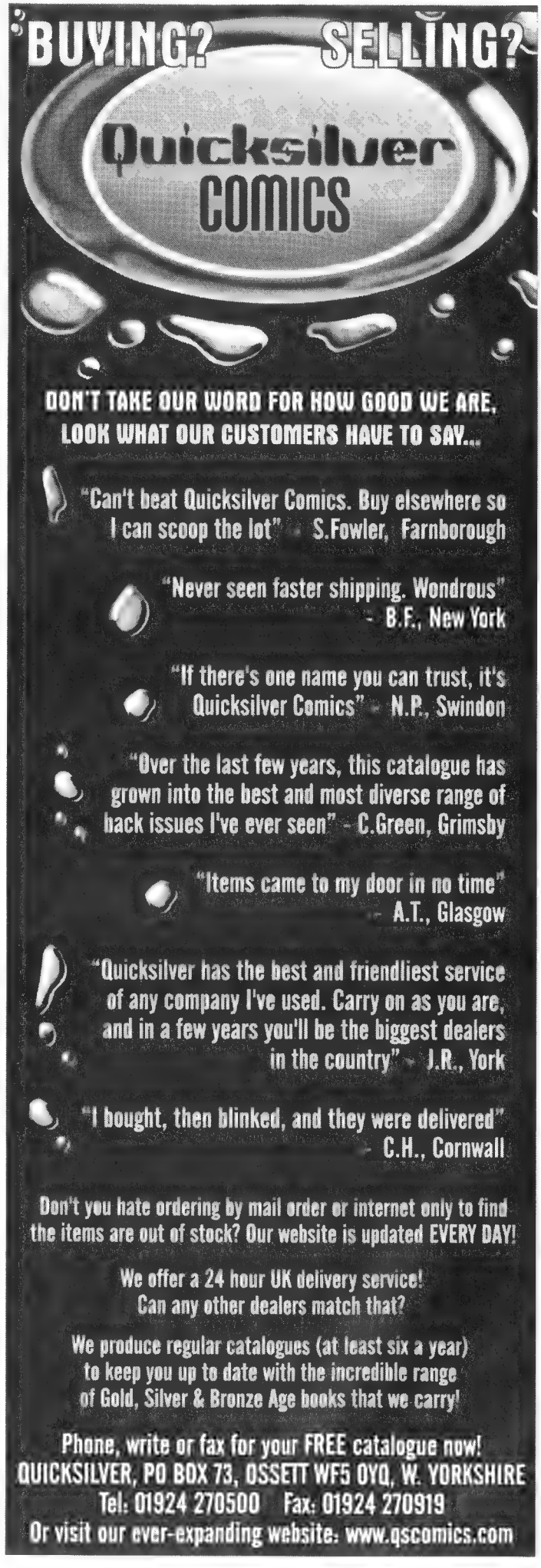
Viz also, for a while, dragged comics towards the 'top shelf' (on to it, even) and left a potential vacuum wherein failed successors have believed they have no option but to make their products more profane (which is partly why most current comics are TV-related nursery fare, with the definitive Scottish exceptions).

If I were to write an all-time top ten of 'great' comics (as opposed to personal preferences), along with the evergreen **Beano** and the ubiquitous **Eagle** (but regrettably neither **Whizzer and Chips** nor **Whoopee**, which I always found difficult to tell apart) I should feel strongly obliged to include **Viz**, in terms of influence and sales (and John can't argue that IPC never used that latter yardstick). Strangely, I see no mention in John's piece of IPC's **Oink!** – another contender for the Top Ten due to its mould-breaking excellence – and its successors, born out of the necessities of that shortish late-Eighties period when **Viz** knocked everything sideways.

John rightly says that the Donalds aimed at a low denominator, but others from a holier-than-though perch would fire that same accusation at John's stock-in-trade, comics in general. This belies IPC's continued use of "decent English", which I sincerely applaud. I was surprised at John's lapse into US corporate-speak, though ("...they sure help to fill out the pages").

It's a shame that all of the above sounds negative, when it is merely meant to expound the 'supportable' aspects of **Viz**.

Rather than feeling negative about JS, I personally regret the absence from today's market of IPC comics' presence and product.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Baffle us with comics questions, or save us with answers!

Marvel Mystery Comic

Andy Jones
4 Norcliffe Road, Rainhill
Merseyside L35 8LL

WHEN I was about nine years old a then housemate of my dad's, a gent called Paul Loney, had a strip published in a Marvel UK comic.

I dinstinctly remember it also featured a chapter of Alan Moore and Alan Davis's *Captain Britain*, so I assume it to have been an issue of **X-Men Archives**. It also reprinted **Wolverine** (limited series) #4, and Miller's original cover art adorned this too.

The strip itself was a very nicely drawn Flash Gordon knock-off, with a style I now recognise as being half way between Davis and Michael Golden.

Can anyone tell me which issue this would have been, and where I could obtain a copy?

More importantly, does anyone know whatever became of this talented artist?

You're looking in the wrong place, Andy! ***X-Men Archives*** *was an – at times – reprint of UK material to bolster the Marvel US market share.*

You're right that it did collect the Captain Britain material by Messrs Moore and Davis, but you need to track down an issue from the original run in the UK monthly ***Mighty World of Marvel.***

Paul Loney drew Dave Howard's Zip Rogers: Hero of the Universe *in its Marvel Showcase (reader-tryout) slot for issue #8. The strip even got a cover mention.*

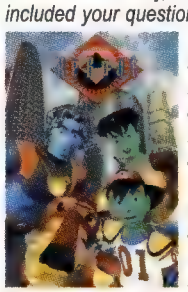
No idea what happened to Paul Loney, but you should be able to pick a copy up easily from most dealers. Expect to pay between £1.50 and £5, dependent on grade and dealer! ...Dez

Reboot availability

Peter Sidebotham
Congleton, Cheshire

CAN anyone tell me if the TV series *Reboot* is available to buy on video or DVD? And did the proposed two films ever get made?

Sort of comics-related, as Reboot *would never have been the same without the input of comics maestro Brendan McCarthy, so we have included your question!*



You can get it through ADV Films (www.advfilms.com). Four videos are available, each collecting four 30-minuters from season three (episodes 24-39, to be precise). Seasons one and two were available through Polygram in 1995, but the license got tangled up when their library was sold to MGM/Universal and they've yet to reappear.

For Kurt Busiek and Carlos Pacheco

Mark Badham-Moore via e-mai

HAVING just read *Return To Krypton* I have to ask... why?

I enjoyed the previous *President Lex* collection, but this... well, I bet they were told to back off over

Uncanny X-Men cover art

Robert Sweeney via e-mail: rabbiejs2000@yahoo.co.uk

CAN you tell me who the cover artist was for Marvel's **Uncanny X-Men** #74?

Certainly, Robert. Gil Kane pencilled it (during his burst of "bordered" Marvel cover art in the early 1970s) and it was inked by Frank Giacoia.

The issue itself reprints the original ***X-Men*** *#26 by Roy Thomas, Arnold Roth and Dick Ayers.*

Now if only every question could be that easy!

the overtly political parallels.
Can anybody elucidate?

Black Knight backstory

David
27 Candlemas Lane
Beaconsfield, Bucks HP9 1AF

WHAT is the history of the *Black Knight* strip?

Great question, surname-less one. So, how long you got?

As you say Black Knight "strip" as opposed to the character, I'm making the assumption you're talking about the old ***Hulk Comic*** *serial we launched at Marvel UK in 1979 that brought back Captain Britain after the wince-worthy first run Captain America cum Spider-Man hybrid foisted on us by America.*

Basically, when I took the job of revitalising Marvel UK when they'd run out of good US strips to reprint, I knew we'd come off a poor second if we tried to originate out-and-out super-heroes. We'd no history or experience of them, and even the US imported colour titles' sales paled in comparison to domestic adventure weeklies with their mix of strips covering war, SF, mystery, horror and such.

The phenomenal success of MCA's Ken Johnson-created Hulk *TV series made the Marvel character a natural to be the lead in his own originated weekly, resulting in a cross between the "Hulk smash!" Marvel US version and the nomadic TV reincarnation. But we needed backup strips. SHIELD was perfect, no superpowers there, and I felt there was mileage in two US-established heroes who had an identical though not realised root: Merlin.*

THE BLACK KNIGHT HAS ARRIVED AT THE GATES OF OTHERWORLD, ONLY TO FIND THAT HIS COMRADE-IN-ARMS, CAPTAIN BRITAIN, HAS BEEN SLAIN BY THE WHITE RIDER OF DEATH !
THIS QUEST WAS ILL-STARRED FROM THE BEGINNING... AND NOW ENDS FITTINGLY, IN IGNOMINIOUS DEFEAT!
WOULD THAT MY LIFE HAD BEEN TAKEN, INSTEAD OF HIS !
BUT WHERE A HUMAN WILL MAY WAVER...AN ELF'S MAY PERSEVERE...
GATHER YOUR RESOLVE, MY FRIEND...FOR WE ARE ON THE THRESHOLD OF OTHERWORLD, WHERE LIFE AND DEATH ARE ONE!
AND REMEMBER WHO WAITS FOR US THERE...MERLYN HIMSELF!
HE INSTRUCTED US TO BRING HIM CAPTAIN BRITAIN ...AND WE HAVE OBEYED!
MERLYN IS MASTER OF MANY THINGS, IT'S TRUE ...BUT CAN HE HOLD SWAY OVER DEATH ITSELF?
NO! HE CANNOT!
BY THE GODS... WHO HAS SPOKEN?

Editors being only as good as their (commercial) ideas and creatives' database, I looked to writer Steve Parkhouse to develop the concept. I knew he had a love of quests, myths and legends and had worked with him on ***House of Hammer*** *and at IPC.*

John Stokes had impressed me at ***Buster*** *on Fishboy, with his graceful and elegant art, but had no experience of the more dynamic Marvel approach.*

So, as I had Paul Neary on hand (sharing an office!) and he'd already worked for America, I got Paul to pencil and John to ink the strip.

I believe that, as a writer, it's Steve's best work. Running the entire 63 issues it told an epic tale yet to be collected (hint). Above is a part-page sequence from #22. Great stuff!

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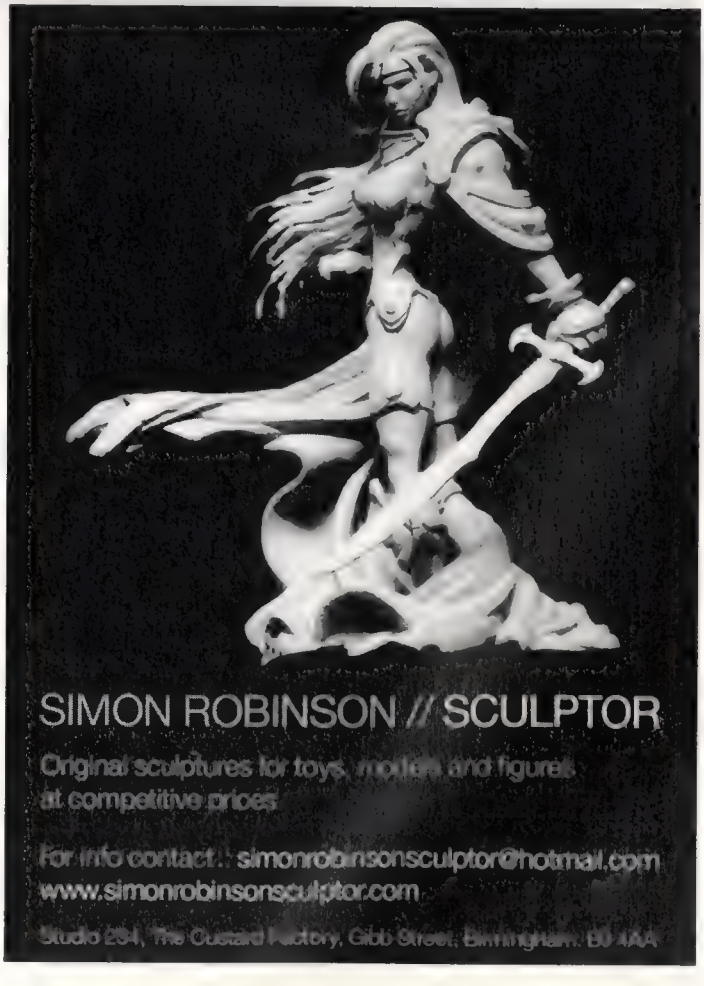
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Networks

Comics news and gossip on the Internet

Compiled by Chris Rice and his team of Netmites

Rich Johnston's LYING IN THE GUTTER

The mild-mannered creator of the Internet's original comics industry rumour and news column has outraged many a publisher and survived more than one change of website. Despite several attempts to stop it, the Squiddy Award-winning gutterpress site continues to thrive, with over 20,000 hits a week at its home of www.comicbook resources.com

From his unique vantage point, Rich often scoops the industry newshounds with his stories. Here are the highlights from this month's Gutter...

WONG STUDIO

When the Chinese news media reported the death of Will Eisner, in his obituary they used a photo of Disney headman Michael Eisner..

I'M SUPER, THANKS FOR ASKING

An earlier rumour seems to be picking up speed concerning Bryan Singer's *Superman* movie.

Originally, the story went that Bryan Singer wanted to cast an actor who was in the closet, and who would out themselves in the lead up to, or during the release of the film. So it would have a meta-textual element, playing up on the reality of having a secret identity both in the fantastic fiction of a superhero movie and how actors hide their true nature in Hollywood. But it would also give young people a strong media-positive role model. And presumably, not just create stereotypical remarks about men dressed in tight colourful leotards.

Then Brandon Routh was cast in the lead... who'd previously appeared in *Will & Grace*.

Then Lex Luthor went to Kevin Spacey, described by the British tabloid press as "a friend of Peter Mandelson". Lois Lane to Kate Bosworth, currently dating Orlando Beard. And even Sir Ian McKellen was mentioned being approached to play Perry White.

As the evangelical churches of the USA are holding their breath, ready to start an onslaught of mob-hatred, maybe Brian Singer's showing his cards too readily.

BATMAN BEGINS AGAIN

In the new *Batman Begins* movie, I hear there's a brief glimpse at the origin, or pre-origin of every famous Batman villain. Gotham is initially portrayed as a city without super-villains until The Scarecrow releases a toxin creating an army of weird freaks that will, in time, feed Arkham's groaning halls...

THE GRUDGE

Remember the **Batman/Daredevil** crossover kerfuffle that Brian Bendis went public with, appealing to Paul Levitz's better nature? And his subsequent apology for the problems it caused DC, and the fact that he damned the project the moment he started speaking?

There does seem to be some further history between Paul and Brian here. I understand that Bendis was the chosen writer for the upcoming **Flash** movie, but Levitz personally intervened and got him ejected from the project – replacing him with David Goyer. And all because of Bendis's close association with Joe Quesada.

BAD DREAM

Over the last year, *Lying In The Gutters* has reported problems that **Transformers** publisher DreamWave has had paying creators. Last month, head writers Adam Patyk and John McDonaugh went public saying they'd left DreamWave because they hadn't been paid and were taking legal action. As fans disbelief turned to belief, a new company called Dream Engine was set up by co-owner Roger Lee, just as Hasbro was removing the Transformers licence.

John Ney Reiber, writer of **Transformers vs GI Joe** and **Killzone**, then wrote me to add: "DreamWave is apparently preparing to close its offices. A press release

continued on next page...

Net sightings

Of Cats & Clerks

ANYBODY recall the Black Cat mini-series that Kevin Smith started a few years ago? Well, it would appear that Smith finally remembered that he hadn't finished it, as patient artist Terry Dodson revealed on his own newsgroup:

I have received the script to **Spider-Man and the Black Cat** #4, and I believe it was worth the wait. A real page-turner of a script (I'm sure it had a lot to do with the fact that I was as curious as you as to what happened next!). Now, Marvel is not going to have me start drawing this until all the scripts are turned in, which makes perfect sense. So I imagine I will work on it as soon as I wrap up my **Marvel Knights Spider-Man** project.

With a gap in his work schedules, Kevin Smith tries to remember what unfinished comics scripts he'd taken on for Marvel.

Networks *would imagine that if Smith's time has freed up enough to finish off his much-delayed comics work, this may mean we're finally to see an end to the similarly hanging* ***Daredevil: The Target*** *series that Smith started for artist Glenn Fabry started at around the same time.*

Hugathon

STILL on the subject of Kevin Smith, there have been rumours knocking around for a few years that there was some bad blood between him and fellow-scripter Brian Michael Bendis over ***Daredevil****, but the truth finally came out in the following exchange on the Bendis message board that Kevin Smith was involved in.*

Smith was asked: Are you and Bendis good friends? *He replied:* Good friends? No. I don't even know if I'd call us friends, really. We're friendly. Problem is, a couple years back, I kind of acted like an asshole re: Bendis. I guess I got jealous or felt threatened by his rising star, and childishly lashed out at him a bit: once in **Wizard** (with some quote about wanting to put **Daredevil** back in the top ten again) and once at Marvel (when I insisted he couldn't use Bullseye in one of his arcs, because I was supposed to do the next DD/Bullseye story, following Karen Page's death.

So rather than become fast friends with a guy I share similar interests with, I acted like a total fuck-hole. We've since kinda put it behind us (or rather, he's been good enough to put my bullshit behind us), but it still bugs me that I acted the way I did. So fucking amateur hour on my behalf. The fact of the matter is, I really like his writing. He's yet to turn in a bad read, in my opinion. I've liked the stuff he's done with **Daredevil**, and his **Ultimate Spider-Man** is a consistently good read. **Powers** never disappoints either.

The next question was: Are you ever gonna collaborate on something...? *Smith replied:* We almost did on an upcoming *What If...?* story about Daredevil, but it didn't pan out, time-wise. But Brian's such a great plotter and dialogue-man, that dude needs no help in the writing department. Interestingly, Warren Ellis once added fuel to the fire (unintentionally, I think, but still) when he wrote (and I'm paraphrasing) "Brian Bendis is the kind of writer Kevin Smith wishes he could be." That made me so angry, and like an idiot, I focused that anger on Bendis instead of Ellis for making the comment in the first place (there was a bit of divine justice, though, in the reason that Ellis had to shutter his website).

Turns out, though, that Ellis was right: Bendis is the kind of comic book writer I wish I was: he's able to turn out excellent quality in stunning quantities. And always on time, no less.

Bendis replied later in the thread: Yeah, that is absolutely a true story. Kinda surprised he shared it. The whole time it was going on I was baffled. Only after his similarly worded apology to me did I understand it. All is long forgotten and forgiven in my book. Because I gotta say – I can count on one hand the people I know who have apologized for anything they've done... ever. It was personal growth and you so rarely see it in anyone, I was thrilled to reward it. His unnecessary compliments to me aside – that was very classy indeed.

And I did win $60 off of him in blackjack last summer and I won't lie to you, it was the sweetest money I've ever seen.

The whole exchange just makes you feel warm and snugly, doesn't it. Networks would like to thank our Richie J for pointing out this story.

Comic-Bach Guy

Ex-Skid Row singer Sebastian Bach is a comics fan it would appear. In a recent interview on the Portland Mercury site, he revealed, um, all:

I have thousands of comics. Specifically Silver-Age Marvel. I have **Amazing Fantasy** #15: the first appearance of Spider-Man – it's worth 30 grand. I bought **Hulk** # 3 in Germany on tour. I have all the **X-Men** where they change costumes, and each one is worth thousands and thousands – I bought all those when I was little, right off the stand for 20 cents. When I was a kid, me and my friend Andrew had a tree fort and we'd go up there and put all our comics in plastic bags and keep 'em perfect. I didn't know they'd be worth anything, but man – good fucking thinking. I get the price guide and shit, and I just laugh – my wife can't believe it. One of the most valuable things I have is my comic collection.

Portland's a fairly weird but cool place, so the following question probably wasn't that unusual for a daily newspaper: If you were forced at gunpoint to have a three-way with two comicbook characters and one had to be a man, who would they be? *Bach replied*: I'd have to say Valkyrie from the Defenders – she was fuckin' hot. I find it somewhat weird that I get turned on by a comicbook character, but anyway... Oh, I forgot, Cherry

Poptart. You should pick up one of those—they're X-rated, but she's a little minx. Or Gwen Stacy, who the Green Goblin killed in **Spider-Man.** I can't remember the exact issue. Green Goblin threw

Ex-Skid Row singer Sebastian Bachs, not yer average comic fan

her off a bridge – she was absolutely awesome. So that's three chicks, and then one of them has to be a man? Huh... Oh, it definitely has to be Mr. Fantastic. Reed Richards, from the Fantastic Four. He has the ability to stretch any part of his body as big, long, or wide as he wants. I'd like to see some party tricks with that fucker.

Networks *does not expect Bach to have a cameo in the upcoming all-age* Fantastic Four *movie.*

The End . . .

BAZOOKA Jules *creator Neil Googe was recently announced as the new artist on WildStorm's Majestic, and has been doing the promotional rounds. He was interviewed on Newsarama just before Christmas, and revealed the current fate of com.X:* (It's) still there and I, along with Russ and Ed, are still the directors. There's still a lot of interest in the properties in other industries and so we still have a lot going on behind the scenes.

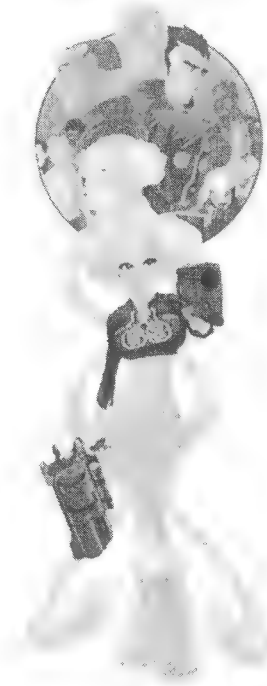
We have had a few bits out this year, **Cla$$war** was finished, as was **Puncture** and we had the **Last American** graphic novel... but as a fully functioning publisher... well no, the simple fact is we under-estimated what it would take... and enthusiasm only gets you so far. We never really had that much cash and so when the big guns came knocking for the likes of Trev [Trevor Hairsine] and Josh [Joshua Middleton], with their promise of great projects, we just couldn't compete.

So I still own a stake in com.X, but I want to do comics and with a lack of funds in com.X, I decided to make a move back into the market properly.

So com.X will continue to chase the deals it's already looking at, as for the comics, I like to think of it as lying dormant until such a time as it can return properly. I'm sure there are people out there who would like to see it return (and I'm sure there are people who wouldn't). So if the funds and time are ever there to do it properly I'm sure it will come back, otherwise it's best left alone.

We tried once... it didn't work out. If it's ever to rise again it will be done right, as we would know some of the pitfalls... but if it ever happens it's some way off yet... Anyway, to be honest, I'm really enjoying doing something separate and unrelated to com.X.

You can check out the full interview at Newsarama, detailing more on ***Majestic*** *and the fate of Neil's com.x title* ***Bazooka Jules****.*



Chris Bunting's COMICS WEBWORLD

Publishers: Part 1. It took a while to catch on – and as with everything there were the naysayers – but the Net is now a highly valued commodity by just about everybody. Comic publishers are no exception, and over the next few issues I'll give you the rundown on their official sites...

DARK HORSE ***www.darkhorse.com***

It's hard to believe that Dark Horse's first comic, **Dark Horse Presents** #1, was released way back in 1986. The publisher has come a long way since then, with many outstanding comicbook achievements, which include bringing us **Hellboy**, **Sin City**, manga **Star Wars**, and TV turned comics writer Joss Whedon. But the Timeline article here will give you a far more comprehensive overview than I can. There's plenty of other entertainment, including interviews, contests, and Zones, all housed in this striking black and white cyber stable. **8**

DC COMICS ***www.dccomics.com***

As this is the online home of such legends of fiction as Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman and The Flash, it's very easy to forget that it's also the residence of imprints Vertigo, WildStorm, MAD, DC Kids, CMX and others. This colourful, eye-catching site's top offerings are *Sneak Peeks, Secret Files* (character profiles) and breaking news. Frank Miller and Jim Lee together on **All-Star: Batman and Robin**? Can't be bad! **9**

DEVIL'S DUE PUBLISHING ***www.devilsdue.net***

Formed in 1999 and becoming an independent publishing house in 2003, DDP shot to stardom when it published a revamp of **G.I. Joe** which sold in excess of 100,000. Since then – under its motto "Pop culture is our culture" – DDP has brought us **Voltron**, plus **Street Fighter**, and recently, its own superhero universe, *Aftermath*. This slick site covers them all, and while it's a little light on the ground, it's early days and will no doubt grow in tandem with the publisher itself. **7**

IMAGE COMICS ***www.imagecomics.com***

The claim made here that Image "cover nearly every genre, sub-genre and style imaginable" would have been almost unimaginable back in 1992, when the publisher was formed by seven super-hot breakaway artists. Back then, Image was purely superhero driven, but today it brings us everything from **Midnight Nation** to **Savage Dragon**. Even we Brits are in on the act, such as artist Jack Lawrence with **Lions, Tigers & Bears** and Paul Grist's **Jack Staff**. The site itself keeps up the great form, and my favourite feature has to be the five-page previews. **8**

MARVEL ***www.marvel.com***

Two things have always struck me about this site: It looks great and is incredibly easy to traverse. But is it style over content? With Dotcomics, online exclusives (at time of writing, pics of the **New Avengers** variant covers), a Marvel Universe section, movie info, the latest Cup O' Joe, and the chance to vote for the next characters to make it into Heroclix, I'd say "that ain't so, true believer!" **9**

Honourable mention: **TOKYOPOP** ***(www.tokyopop.com)***

Rich Johnston's LYING IN THE GUTTER

continued from previous page...

is forthcoming, I'm told. Neither Pat nor Roger Lee have confirmed this – to me, anyway. Which could be very naturally attributed to the holiday season. Or just as naturally attributed to any number of less jolly causes.

In the New Year, the press releases went out, as well as requests for outstanding debts to be send to a receiving company. Yet, as this column goes to press, there's no evidence that DreamWave has gone into receivership and no actual legal letters have gone out from a receiver. Reiber noted that this affects, "at least 17 unpaid freelancers – claiming amounts ranging from $350 to $40,000" and that "DreamWave seems to be unwilling to disclose the name of the [receivership] company, or provide the contact information which would enable DreamWave's creditors or their legal representatives to to find out what's really going on."

And, with all Marvel cheques diverting to Dream Engine, a number of owed creators are joining together for a legal challenge.

DOT JOINING

Written by Geoff Johns, drawn by Phil Jiminez, this summer's big DC event is being referred to as *Crisis 2.* It will be the culmination of the upcoming **Countdown** series. it appears that **Identity Crisis** and other events across the DC Universe will provide plot points that will all tie in to said extravaganza. Look for a number of books to start kicking things off.

An early indicator will be in the **Adam Strange** series. Keep your eyes open over there for something... whether in the book, or on a spinoff series entitled **The Rann/Thangar War**.

I'm told other events contributing to the overall revamping and adrenaline injection of the DC Universe include *Day of Vengeance* and *Villains United.*

And recently in an issue of **Teen Titans** written by Geoff Johns, Batman (the adult Tim Drake) mentions a crisis that happened not long after the Titans got sucked into the future.

Start joining the dots, people.

GO JOE

I understand Devil's Due Publishing is canceling the **G.I. Joe** title as of issue #45 (though it could be as early as #44). However, all is not lost. The book is allegedly being relaunched with an all-new continuity and an all-new #1 issue. Joe Casey has agreed to write it.

With just four or five issues left to go, Josh Blaylock intends to add in some bigtime shakeups – probably deaths of major characters. This will "stir reader interest," hopefully boost sales, but in the end, continuity will be rebooted. Either continuing from Marvel's last issue, or starting from scratch again.

The aim is for a "grit-n-gritty" Joe title, ala **Reloaded** (which, by the way, has also been cancelled).

WONDER ARTIST

Wonder Woman as a movie written and directed by Joss Whedon is a common rumour right now.

But I've also heard that fresh off his coral TARDIS designs for Doctor Who, Bryan Hitch is involved in a similar capacity with the Amazon project.

Okay, how long until Paul Levitz finds out?

WIZARD'S SLEEVE

Just how did **What If... Karen Page Had Lived** make it onto the ballot for **Wizard**'s *Best of The Year 2004?* With **Wizard**'s six-week lead times, and the fact the comic was published in the last week of December, had they really seen an issue before it found itself deserving of a ballot? Even artist Michael Lark was mystified when he emailed round trying to drum up votes.

But then, it's probably the same way that Jim Lee won best penciller two years in a row for his work on **Hush** which was only a year-long project.

Reviews

*Because few retailers allow titles to be read before purchase, **CI**'s comprehensive reviews section enables comics readers to keep abreast of the wide range of titles currently being published and draw readers' attention to comics they might otherwise ignore. Naturally, this section is of even greater benefit to readers who rely solely on mail order, as they can only judge the quality of a title after purchase.*

***Review codes:** Individual titles are judged against all similar comics past and present on a **1** to **10** basis, while a comparison is made against previous issues of the same title, ranging from <—> to <+++>. Hence, a quality comic may score an 8 against all others, but have slid from a previous issue's 9, denoted by <->. No change is marked <=>. We do not compare **Bone** with **X-Men**, but review each within their genre.*

***Review panel:** Chris E. Bunting (CEB), Jon Edwards (JE), Kelvin Green (KG), David Knight (DK), Scott Montgomery (SM), Kieron Mullens (KM), Ian Murphy (IM), Alex Thompson (MAT)*

Dark Horse

B.P.R.D.: The Dead

by Mignola + Arcudi & Davis

<=> Mike Mignola's Hellboy was originally envisaged as a team book, so his supporting characters are unsurprisingly well suited to their own group adventures. Fresh from DC's quirky Doom Patrol series, John Arcudi shows his gothic side, while also allowing for the comical as Abe Sapien explores his mysterious past, the team investigates its new headquarters and Roger the homunculus tries on trousers. Guy Davis's eccentrically scratchy linework perfectly evokes the creaky atmosphere. (MAT) 8

The Goon 10

by Powell + Lennon

<=> Eric Powell pays homage to Dickens in his own unique way as his cast of grotesque characters act out *A Christmas Carol* with a comical twist. They fit disturbingly well into character, but you won't be able to view Tiny Tim in the same way ever again… Elsewhere, Thomas Lennon provides a humorous short story with Powell on spot illustrations, depicting the violent short-arse Franky searching for the legendary boxcar of ladies shoes. (MAT) 8

DC Comics

Batman: Gotham Knights 60

by Lieberman & Pina + Portela

<=> The story starts out well with Alfred getting into trouble coming to a stranger's aid; but then takes a sharp left-turn with new Bat-villain Hush putting his latest scheme into action. Whether this helps or hinders the story, it keeps the pace and excitement up and leaves readers pondering a real conundrum. Is writer A.J. Lieberman just toying with us, or what? (DK) 7

The Batman Strikes! 4

by Matheny & Jones + Beatty

Spinning off from the latest TV incarnation of The Dark Knight's cartoon exploits, this re-vamped junior Batman title sets the tone firmly on adventure, rather than violence, with a younger, cockier Bruce Wayne behind the cowl. *Without A Chance* sees our hero square up to super-strong villain, Bane. A snappy, if rather straightforward, tale. Good fun. (SM) 7

Deadshot 1

by Gage & Cummings + Palmiotti

Deadshot is back in his own limited series once more, and that's got to be something worth celebrating, even if his overhauled costume lacks the distinctiveness of the old one and Killer Frost seems more well-balanced than I remember her. Deadshot uses the proceeds of a criminal escapade to help out an old girlfriend, then starts cleaning up the streets, *Punisher*-style. It's bound to end in tears. Good stuff! (DK) 7

Fables 32

by Willingham & Buckingham + Leiloha; Vertigo

<-> Bigby's father turns up, out the blue, Web is unfathomably murdered and there's confusion as to how many babies Snow White birthed. Bill Willingham develops a wide range of sub-plots beyond these, skilfully teasing and holding our attention, and giving the book new freshness opening up a number of intriguing directions. While the plotting engages, the script doesn't play to artist Mark Buckingham's strengths. The art sometimes looks ordinary and indistinct, especially in Prince Charming's office, but where given the opportunity to cut loose – looking better on splash pages and large panels than on smaller, conversational scenes – Buckingham still produces the goods. (IM) 7

Fallen Angel 17

by David & Lopez

<=> In a classic case of taking the mountain to Mohammed, the Fallen Angel causes a scene in Bete Noire to bring the city's ruling hierarchy out of hiding... which really goes down a storm. Then there's the shock-of-an-ending, surely one of the most controversial in comics for quite some time. (CEB) 8

Gotham Central 26

by Brubaker & Alexander

When a televangelist is murdered, Catwoman is the immediate suspect – but Detective MacDonald has a hunch, and a secret. Ed Brubaker brilliantly writes this superhero-related cop drama, full of handbrake turns and tiny details, and immediately gels with new artist Jason Alexander, who movingly works to 'less is more', his relaxed lines blending with dense and layered inks. A great start to a new arc. (IM) 8

Human Target 17

by Milligan & Stewart

<+> Christopher Chance helps witness protection girl Maggie change her identity. Peter Milligan takes us into the complicated psychological world of identity, and through Maggie we see more of Chance himself, the choices he's made and the psychological damage it's wrought. Cameron Stewart's guest art continues the straightforward but sophisticated mood this book has cultured, and is bolstered by Lee Loughridge's considered and mood affecting colours. (IM) 7

Identity Crisis 7

by Meltzer & Morales + Bair

<=> The final issue of this startling series brings yet another shocking revelation, and it's a horrible one. No spoilers here, because there's bound to be someone who hasn't read it yet; but that's a heck of a way for a plan to have awful consequences. Shades of *Watchmen* in this final part, if not all along. Excellent writing, and some impressive artwork from Rags Morales and Michael Bair. (DK) 9

JLA 109

by Busiek & Garney + Green

<=> The Crime Syndicate of Amerika blathers on about nothing much, having discovered their universe is merely months old, and are determined to make someone pay for whatever it is that has happened to them. Meanwhile, the Qwardians get excited about a suit of magic armour, but it's hard to imagine readers getting excited about this tedious read. (DK) 3

<-> The Crime Syndicate arrives on Earth, keeping a low profile from the JLA, while the Qwardians gain an aggressive new Highlord. Kurt Busiek's plot is slow, lacks interest and thus far has minimal relation to Avengers/JLA, which was a selling point for the run. Ron Garney pencils often barely recognisable characters and hams it up all the way, which is, frankly, no more than this tepid, two-line plot deserves. Tripe. (IM) 3

The Losers 19

by Diggle & Jock; Vertigo

<=> The team's final mission for the US government stands revealed as the sinister Max pulls strings leaving the team for dead – and thirsty for vengeance on the corrupt agency man. Throughout the series Andy Diggle has been aiming for a mainstream action adventure series with a cinematic slant – with all the drawbacks that suggests, as here the heroes show their sensitive side with the rescuing of orphans. Fortunately Diggle tempers the patriotic gung-ho tone with another surprise twist while Jock's shadowy blocks of ink and grungy linework are far from the slick Hollywood norm. (MAT) 8

Metal Hurlant 14

by various; Humanoids

<=> Bookended by two very different zombie tales – the brooding work of Stefabo Raffaele and Guy Davis at his most comical – Humanoids' fantasy anthology brings the cream of European and American creative talent together. Painterly French artist Gerald Parel and emerging Scottish writer Jim Alexander bring a sinister twist to cowboy showdowns, while US creators Jim McDonald and D-Pi weave a nihilistic tale of drug abuse and out of body experience. Also showcased is the publisher's latest prodigy, Stephane Levallois, whose fragile inking and moody watercolour washes bring a disturbing dimension to his tale. (MAT) 7

The Question 2

by Veitch & Edwards

<=> While Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen attend Lex Luthor's latest PR conference, the more investigative reporter Vic Sage scours Metropolis in search of its malaise, inadvertently uncovering a secretive group's aims for Superman's home. This may have the tone of a Vertigo title with its quirky, ponderous atmosphere, but Rick Veitch skilfully weaves this story of Ditko's enigmatic superhero into the mainstream DC universe. Tommy Lee Edwards' amazing artwork straddles the two, with action and everyday expertly balanced. (MAT) 8

Robin 133

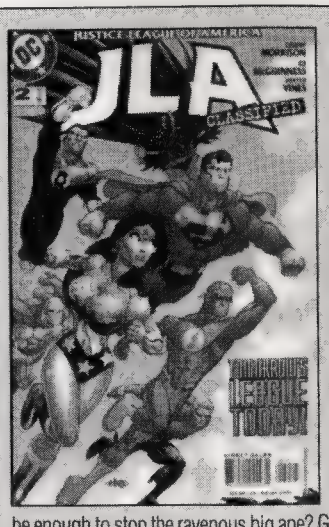
by Willingham & Scott

<-> Robin and Batgirl face down a mass of armed and powered allies of Penguin. Skilled though they are, writer Bill Willingham shows they're out of their depth in an excitingly penned and thoughtfully constructed brawl. Damian Scott's artwork has helped refresh this title, but he is struggling to bring clarity to complex fight sequences such as these – and while his adorably sullen faces suit a depressed and confused Robin they don't suit Penguin's allies. Ever-impressive writing, but sadly the artwork doesn't gel with action-led text. (IM) 6

Space Ghost 2

by Kelly & Olivetti

<-> Recovering from wounds inflicted by the



JLA Classified 2

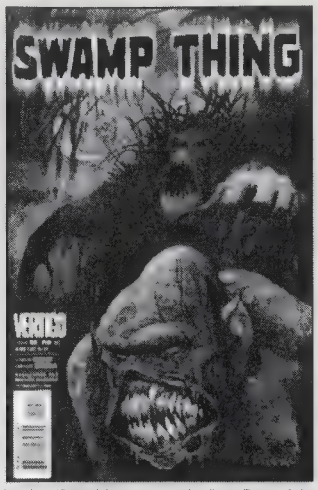
by Morrison & McGuinness + Vines

<-> I had great hopes for this three-part story, but they've been very quickly dashed by this second instalment, which was a real chore to read. The scene with the Ultramarine Corps survivors trapped in their armoury held my interest up to a point, but what one finds under the gobbledegook dialogue is a very conventional plot. Maybe all the good ideas got used up in part one? (DK) 3

<=> With the main team hunting a psychotic supervillain in an infant universe, Batman and cockney sidekick The Squire are left to deal with Gorilla Grodd and his mind controlling mercenaries. Will the assistance of Bruce's mechanical versions of his allies be enough to stop the ravenous big ape? Grant Morrison's clever ideas mix seamlessly with the iconic characters, while Ed McGuinness's chunky character designs and electric pages sparkle with the same charisma. (MAT) 7

Swamp Thing 10

by Dysart & Breccia; Vertigo



<+> Sensing the presence of newly summoned demon Arcane, Swamp Thing reforms and, falling under his influence, confronts Arcane's Hellish hunters. While Joshua Dysart's plotting is convoluted it is stirring and involving and has the freakish vision to make this run memorable. Enrique Breccia's art is a mixed bag; his inking is heavy, especially on human characters, his corpse-haunting demons may be overblown but they are also, appropriately to the script, ghoulish. If he can tone down the artistic hysteria a couple of notches he might fulfil the promise his work clearly has. (IM) 6

<=> Swamp Thing manages to manifest himself back on Earth, but may be too late as the escaped demons' earthly miasma begins to pervert their surroundings. Dysart's script is disturbing enough, but Breccia's etched style really takes it to another dimension of queasiness. His twisted, maggot-infested demons and medieval visions of Hell really push the title's "mature reader" stamp. (MAT) 8

corrupt interplanetary police and thirsty for vengeance, Thaddeus Bach is nursed to health by a mysterious alien. Joe Kelly's origin story for the cartoon character is surprisingly more grim than one would expect for Saturday morning kids' TV. In fact, Ariel Olivetti's muscular artwork appears much more influenced by the likes of *Heavy Metal* than by origintors Hanna Barbara, making him an impressive – if inappropriate – choice for this series. (MAT) 6

WildStorm Winter Special

by various; WildStorm

WildStorm celebrates Christmas (and the exclusive signing of Josh Middleton) with an anthology of stories highlighting its characters. Middleton and Bruce Jones reveal some of Zealot's hidden past, while Cary Nord and Scott Iwahashi's distinctive artwork illustrates Authority characters in a throwaway storyline by Tom Peyer and Will Pfeifer. The standout, though, is Carlos D'Anda's art for Allen Warner's Deathblow tale, which brings a similar horrific dynamism as Jim Lee's original work on the character. It's a shame that Michael Turner's '90s style cover fails to reflect the modern artistry inside. (MAT) 7

Y – The Last Man 29

by Vaughan & Guerra + Marzan Jr

<-> Dr Mann stumbles across the reason for Yorick's recent haemorrhaging – and, incidentally, perhaps why he survived the plague; Agent 355's dramatic confrontation with Anna Strong and the Sekauket Ring comes to a violent conclusion. Brian K Vaughan's engrossing plotting continues to swirl, allowing readers to mislead themselves in an entertaining and satisfying way, where lesser writers would leave us frustrated. Pia Guerra's usually charming pencils struggle to convey fluidity in the major fight scene, but the 'hospital' scenes are as stylish as ever and Zylonol's colouring is beautifully understated. (IM) 7

Image

Hunter/Killer 0

by Waid & Silvestri + Weems V + Banning; Top Cow

Wolf beats Sam's Hunter/Killer squad to rogue superbeing Cathy Cthulu to stop her telling them the location of other rogues; a young man hides out with his parents in rural Montana. Mark Waid covers as much plot as can be expected in a 12-page premiére, and throws out the requisite hints about mysterious characters, while Marc Silvestri's pencils his usual irritatingly pert, inflatable women and either cleanly polished or heavily-lined faces, a style I'm waiting for him to grow out of. It's hard to tell from this whether we're witnessing a

Astonishing X-Men 7

by Whedon & Cassaday

<+> The team saves New York from a giant lizard as part of a PR exercise. Nothing particularly exciting going on here, but this is good solid superheroics, with excellent art and strong writing. Characterisation is spot on, there's some good power displays, and lots of fun humour. (KG) 8

<=> Attempting to improve mutant PR, the reunited comrades take down a hulking monster threatening New York, with a little help from the Fantastic Four. However, recent events lead to tragedy for one young pupil. Joss Whedon shows a genuine love of Marvel's characters and reminds us of his ability to script cracking dialogue. Although some pages look a little off, John Cassaday's skilful depiction of the superpowered foursome had this fanboy wishing for more! (MAT) 7

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collection of comics clichés or the debut of a promising political thriller – but for 25 cents it's worth trying. (IM) 5

Marvel

Cable & Deadpool 10

by Nicieza & Zircher

I've long been a fan of the titular characters, as well as writer Fabian Nicieza and penciller Patrick Zircher, so a look at this comic is certainly overdue. And what an issue to come onboard, as Cable and the Silver Surfer slug it out, while everyone from the X-Men to the Serpent Society keep Deadpool busy. Action, strong characters, humour, and set in the very heart of the Marvel Universe… what more could you ask for? (CEB) 8

Captain America & The Falcon 10

by Priest & Bennett + Jadson

<=> Cap, Falcon and the Naval Cap (a much better name than the awful anti-Cap, especially now he's an ally) uncover the truth behind MODOK's attacks and Admiral Jimmy's machinations. Priest's plot plays with shifting the reader's realities so that what's new changes what we thought had gone before. In most hands this would be clumsy and frustrating, like the rug being pulled from under you, but Priest keeps me on board through the constantly surprising, twisting narrative. Jo Bennett's pencils are good, his clean lines are bold and charming, his flying Falcon excellent, but neither innovative nor outstanding. (IM) 6

Daredevil 68

by Bendis & Maleev

<-> Bont's henchman, the original Gladiator, continues to torture Daredevil, but finds it insufficient revenge, pushing him to further up the ante. Brian Michael Bendis astutely knits together plot threads from multiple eras as events rush towards their modern-day conclusion, but I detect a change, a weakening in the usually faultless artwork. On the last few pages there's a crisper line definition because of the contrasting completely jet-black backgrounds, undermining the usually murky atmosphere. When it happens, the art looks sore and less sophisticated, meaning the great is reduced to being merely good. (IM) 7

District X #8

by Hine & Medina + Sicat

Ortega loses his temper; Melek, leader of outcasts who live underground, orchestrates an explosive assault on the city above. David Hine's scripts have developed an impressive series of relationships and have all built to this point, taking me from curious to caring and excited about the characters' future. Lan Medina's pencils are pleasant but feel slightly detached, and while Alejandro Sicat's thick, evocative inks are mesmerising on Madrox, sometimes the lines are too thick here and can squeeze out subtlety. Great writing; good (but not great) art. (IM) 6

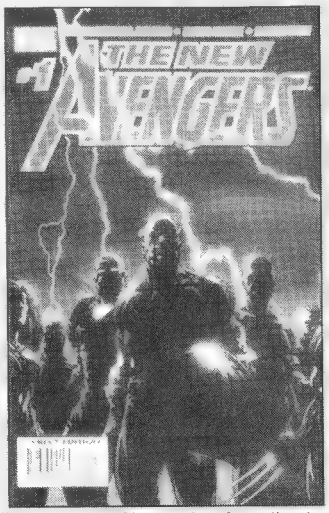
Exiles 55

by Bedard & Calafiore + McKenna

Kulan Gath's cruel reign of New York has been usurped by the more cruel Zarathos; will the Exiles team with Kulan Gath to restore him to his throne, as the Tallus dictates? I've never enjoyed Kulan Gath sorcerous tales in the regular books so I was surprised by the fun and menace embedded in Tony Bedard's modest plot. Mark McKenna's inks, though chunky at times, have more fluidity than many of his contemporaries; Jim Calafiore's pencils excellently emphasise menace, confusion and uncertainty and vividly depict a nasty looking Zarathos. Quirky and still cool. (IM) 7

The New Avengers 1

by Bendis & Finch + Miki



When lawyer Matt Murdoch – with Luke Cage and new SHIELD agent (and original Spiderwoman) Jessica Drew as protection – visits Rykers' supervillain prison, there's a mass breakout. Brian Michael Bendis's re-launched Avengers is dialogue heavy, making sense of the set-up and the characters' current situations more loquaciously than editorial boxes ever did; and while the writing is all build up, it's tense, character led and full of promise. I've knocked David Finch's artwork in the past and while his familiar weaknesses with faces remain, his Spider-Man looks promising and Frank D'armata's colours bring considerable pleasure to the explosive panels. (IM) 6

After upsetting the team and fans alike, Bendis builds from the ground up, as a different group of heroes band together to confront an overwhelming threat. Bendis mixes classic characters with previous associates Daredevil, Spidey and Luke Cage, throwing in a complete eye-opener as the superpowered criminals of Ryker's Maximum Security prison are let loose. Finch's broodingly muscular artwork has already worked successfully with Bendis's scripts and makes no exception here. (MAT) 8

Exiles 56

by Bedard & Calafiore + McKenna

<=> The Exiles strike against Zarathos, and are joined by unexpected allies – and traitors. Tony Bedard's plot feels action-orientated this issue, but the web of intrigue spreads far and wide and in curious directions. JC's colours enjoy all the special effects used in the issue and add to the sense of fantasy, while Mark McKenna's inks draw out the best of Jim Calafiore's hit and miss pencils. (IM) 7

Madrox 4

by David & Raimondi + Hennessy

<-> Madrox works to discover who's trying to take over the mob, and Wolfsbane confronts an astral projecting adulterer. Peter David's superb scripts make this book a highlight of my month, being clever, funny and noir-ish, and his handle on Madrox has completely refreshed the character while respecting all that's gone before. Pablo Raimondi's pencils are mostly supple, and Drew Hennessy's refreshingly layered inks accentuate all the right places and moods and offer slick, toned and flowing hair. One of the few truly great books around, this run deserves to be widely read. (IM) 8

Nightcrawler 3

by Aguirre-Sacasa & Robertson + Faucher

<=> Nightcrawler and Amanda Sefton learn the ghastly fate of the 13 dead children. I'm not convinced that Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa'a plot entirely holds together (why do the demons attack the man who's helping release them and their brother?). But ignoring that, it's fun but nowhere near as scary or suspenseful as it might have been. Darick Robertson and Wayne Faucher's art is enjoyable, murky and atmospheric, although at times the whole comic goes over the top into rather camp territory – which is bad because I think they want to play it straight. (IM) 5

The Pulse 6

by Bendis & Anderson

<=> See the first issues of Secret War through Jessica Jones' eyes; and while I felt cheated, plot-wise, knowing this to be a re-mixed re-run of those events, we do get new light on the proceedings – and it would be lame if The Pulse – in which Jessica's boyfriend Luke Cage and Daredevil are significant characters – didn't touch on the explosive events of Secret War. Brent Anderson's pencil and inks are reminiscent of Michael Gaydos, who gave so much energy and tone to The Pulse's predecessor, Alias, giving the hospital scenes a needed darkness and underlining the seriousness of it all. (IM) 6

She-Hulk 10

by Slott & Pelletier + Magtar

<->The Champion persuades a Watcher to help him avenge She-Hulk – leading him to Titania. Dan Slott's fortified exploration of Titania's origin adds much to our understanding of her and her rivalry with She-Hulk, but it would have benefited from brevity, and the addition of sub-plots or meatier fare. It's a light diversion, but not a main meal in its own right. Dave Kemp's colours are distancing in their gaudiness and Rick Magyar's inks throttle the few highlights of Paul Pelletier's rather ordinary pencils. An off issue of a usually good book. (IM) 5

She-Hulk: Single Green Female

by Slott & Bobillo + Pelletier + Sosa + Paris + Simmons + Hillmans; tpbk

She-Hulk is thrown out of Avengers Mansion for too many parties and unexpected overnight guests, and as Jennifer Walters she gets a job as an attorney, trying cases relating to superheroes – like Spider-Man's libel suit against The Daily Bugle –

Powers Volume 2 #7

by Bendis & Oeming; Icon

<+> Retro Girl takes out a Powers villain and with Walker reviews her actions; Walker and Pilgrim investigate the death of supposedly retired Powers hero Blackguard – whose power source gem is now missing – and find a web of shifting identities and corrupt police. This superb book continually raises the bar for superhero comics through Brian Michael Bendis's intelligent plotting and witty and realistic scripts. Michael Avon Oeming's art is consistent, atmospheric and powerfully expressionistic, while still finding nuance for small moments like the brilliant and underplayed 'Elvis' sequence. I don't think anyone could do this mind-blowingly good book better than Bendis, Oeming and unrivalled colourist Peter Pantazis. (IM) 9

<=> The new Retro Girl learns the hard way about dressing in front of the camera, but has the expert advice of her mentor Detective Walker, who has his own problems as another wannabe superhero is murdered. After some epic storylines, Bendis's return to the cops in superville territory still manages to find novel ways of exploring powers in a real-world setting. Although deceptively modest, Oeming's linework is polished off by Peter Pantazis's moody colour schemes. (MAT) 7

and taking down the villains that hitched a ride on her body to escape a miniature Pym particle prison. Dan Slott's scripts are a whole lot of fun and at their best in this first volume, with sharp humour and poking hilarious fun at superhero clichés. Juan Bobillo's pencils bring a light cartoon touch to the first fout parts but Paul Pelletier's more detailed linework makes the breakout section a blast! Practising law shouldn't be this much fun. (IM) 8

Spectacular Spider-Man 22

by Jenkins & Caldwell + Lee

<++> Mindworm, now a homeless drunk, is unintentionally letting his psyche powers affect the locals. Paul Jenkins writes an interesting story of what happens to villains after they're caught, and apart from a brief sojourn into Spider-Man as cleaning lady (unable to help everyone, he wipes up the mess), he avoids the sentimentality trap. Talent Caldwell's pencils are improving, and memorably render a human Mindworm and uncertain Peter Parker. Norman Lee's inks are light and mostly fluid and add to the emotionally fragile look. (IM) 7

Uncanny X-Men 453

by Claremont & Park + Sibal

<-> Bishop, Storm and Rachel forge unexpected alliances within the Hellfire Club. Chris Claremont's complicated plot is slowly ripening but is hampered by his need for dramatic set-pieces which distract and add little. Andy Park's pencils veer from tolerably okay (his Bishop looks tough, his backgrounds are generally strong) – to trying too hard to look cool (if Nightcrawler would sport such a hairstyle, must it be so clumsily rendered ugly?) but Jn Sibal's inks are equally varied. He uses no subtlety on hair – Rachel's looks like flat pieces of wood, not soft, flexible strands, and he similarly ruins decent pencils of Emma Frost and Courtney Ross. His lightly inked sewers do look impressive though. (IM) 5

Wolverine 23

by Millar & Romita Jr + Janson; Marvel Knights

<+> As Wolverine continues his rampage, we get to see behind the scenes at Hydra, as well as a look at how the heroes are responding. Absolutely stunning art from Romita and Janson (and Paul Mounts on colours) wonderfully complements Mark Millar's script, which is a good fun romp through the Marvel Universe. (KG) 8

X4 #1

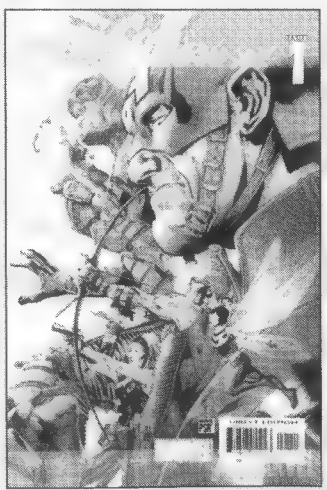
by Yoshida & Lee + Kilisian + Garcia + Armstrong

When there's an accident at a space station, the Fantastic Four want a telepath along to investigate, so ally themselves with the X-Men and six members shuttle up. Akira Yoshida tries to play funny with team-up clichés, but it's used as an excuse to tiresomely repeat them. Pat Lee's style suits this horror/space/mystery tale, and the flavour of the art is well-nourished by Rob Armstrong's loose and oily inks. The Thing in particular looks great and the action sequences are kinetically charged. The colours are impressively subdued, but hindered by ill-conceived panel lighting, leaving bleak and dim pages. There are also minor continuity flaws, but this is a lion-hearted start. (IM) 6

X-Men Unlimited 6

by Bedard & Pelletier + Meikis, Benson & Sanchez + Leister

<=> Tony Bedard writes about Shadowcat, Sage and Emma Frost sharing tales of disastrous dates, while Rachel and Rogue find trouble in a hospital. Tony Bedard's tale is the highlight, which hints at what Emma first saw in Scott, but is marred by Dave Meikis' over-exuberant inks and Transparency Digital's too strong colours. Paul Benson's tale suffers from atrocious Alex Sanchez pencils which struggle to illustrate momentum except when Rachel uses TK. (IM) 4



The Ultimates Volume 2 #1

by Millar & Hitch + Neary

The first nine pages seem like a mixture of wish-fulfilment fantasy and U.S. triumphalism as Captain America is sent in to liberate hostages from Iraq. However, Mark Millar has his cake and eats it too by building a muted dialectic of public condemnation and internal dissent into the narrative half way through. Otherwise, it's genius superhero fun, with the top-flight Avengers' exposed foibles supplying the laughs. (DK) 8

Volume 2 sees Cap criticised for his affair with The Wasp, Thor's politically motivated resignation and Cap rescuing hostages in Iraq, a sequence which is either horrible or a send-up of *Die Hard*-style heroism. I'm not sure, and I feel uncomfortable with it, but either way this blockbuster book just about gets away with it. Millar's writing is otherwise top-notch and his development of Thor is particularly well-handled. Bryan Hitch and Paul Neary produced some fantastic art in the first volume and I'm sure they will again, but only a clutch of panels here contain magic, much of the rest being too confined to dazzle. (IM) 7

A new volume of Marvel's lauded Ultimate title sees neither Millar with his canny scripts nor Hitch and his tightly wrought artwork resting on their laurels. Captain America is sent to Iraq in a publicity-driven hostage rescue and the disgraced Hank Pym visits dosed-up Bruce Banner in captivity, but revelations are about to bring the team's PR crashing down. This is breathtakingly good and needless to say, remains an essential read for anyone after cutting-edge superhero action. (MAT) 9

US Indies

Artesia Afire 5

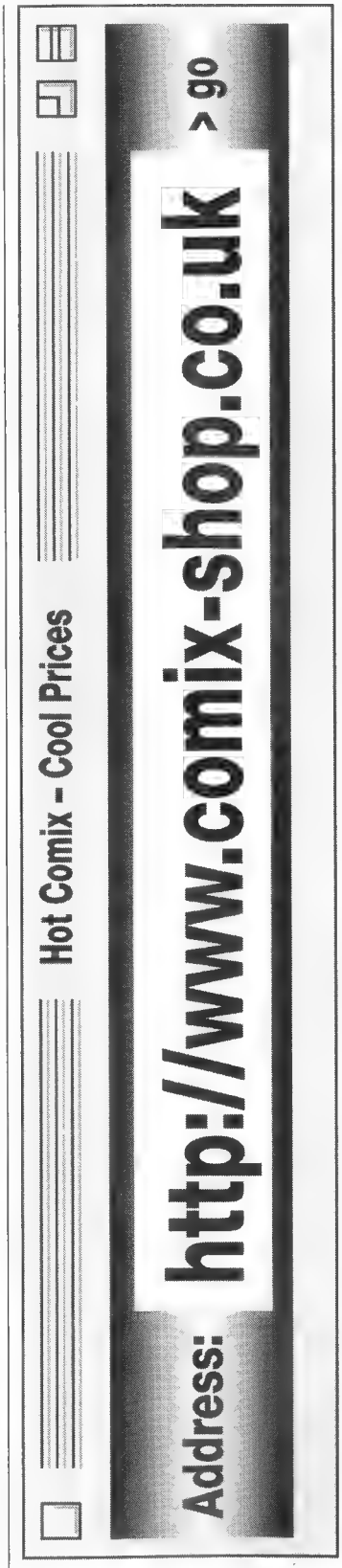
by Smylie. $3.95; Archaia Studio Press

<=> The complex fantasy continues apace as Artesia and her forces make their way to Abenton despite stiff enemy opposition. Many contemporary writer-artists forget that comics are a storytelling medium, and so concentrate on making their product look good, rather than read well. Mark Smylie is an exception. His story is so rich and full that I'd even advise new readers to go straight for the collected editions of this very impressive adult comic. (CEB) 7

Black Hole 12

by Burns; Fantagraphics

<=> After taking nearly nine years, Charles Burns finally concludes his disturbing tale of teenage alienation. Burns' meticulously stylised black and white artwork clearly displays the time and effort spent crafting the pages, yet the script is equally well structured, portraying a heady mix of hallucinogenic flashbacks, wasted lives, sexual frustration and death as protagonist Chris returns to her favourite beach to reflect



on tragic events. This easily stands as Burns' magnum opus and a culmination of his work to date. (MAT) 9

Dead @ 17: Revolution 1

by Howard; Viper Comics

Whereas the previous Dead @ 17 mini-series looked great but often got bogged down in its own recap exposition, this opener looks even greater and has far tighter plotting. Let's hope creator Josh Howard keeps this level of quality throughout the following issues. Demonic lord Bolabogg is back, but this time he's house-hunting... an infamous Wahington-sited white one in particular taking his fancy. (CEB) 7

Dragon Arms: Chaos Blade 4

by Stone & Hutchison; Antarctic Press

<=> Although much of this issue is given over to the continuation of the intense battle between the heroes and the Majin, creative team Carl S. Stone and David Hutchison still find time to build in lots of intrigue and weave in a cliffhanger that will make the wait till next issue seem almost unbearable of the book's fans. Dark and distinctive manga. (CEB) 7

Draw Manga! (Xtreme Art)

by Hart; Watson-Guptill Publications; $6.95

This is part of the Xtreme Art series designed especially for kids, and like all Watson-Guptill how-to-draw books, there's no faulting the production values. As for the content, author Christopher Hart employs a novel four-step trace-and-draw system to really help young wannabe manga artists get started. Hart adds tips on the basics of anatomy too, all of which is presented in a reader-friendly manner. (CEB) 7

Gloom Cookie 22

by Valentino & Sparx; Slave Labor Graphics

<+> In New Orleans, the Carnival Wars reach a crescendo, with a daring rescue followed by outright mayhem unleashed by the Carnival Macabre. Serena Valentino reins in the words to let the pictures tell the story: fireballs, Siamese twins with repeater crossbows, homunculi driving circus wagons and all. Meanwhile, Vermilion gets ready for a date that may not be everything he hoped for. He's got his lucky underpants on though! (DK) 8

Heaven Sent 4

by Dunn; Antarctic Press

<=> A rollercoaster ride of an issue in which some new faces cause trouble for Master Baine, and Kyle realises that his own troubles are only just beginning. The guardian angel tells him that as a Chosen he must begin training, but this involves travelling to the birthplace of all monsters. Will the young protagonist survive long enough to meet his new teacher? (CEB) 7

Masters of the Universe Volume 3 #6

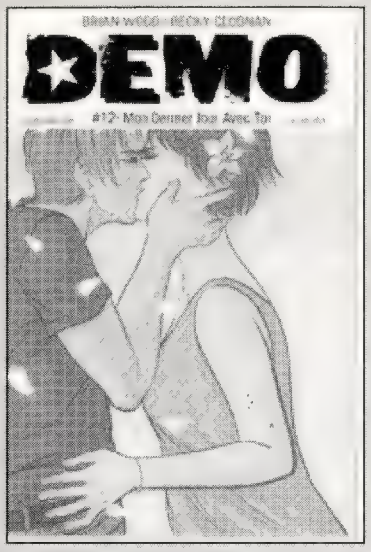
by Scott & Santalucia + Fontana; MVCreations

<+> A return to form this issue as (not coincidentally either) the main characters in the MOTU dynamic – He-Man and Skeletor – come back into focus. A very nifty touch is that this story continues in the MOTU cartoon itself. While this issue marks the exit of top artist Emiliano Santalucia, let's hope it doesn't also mark the exit of publisher MVCreations, who deserve much credit for comics such as this, Rob Zombie's Spookshow International, and Tales of the Realm. (CEB) 7

Demo 12

by Wood & Cloonan; AIT/Planet Lar

<-> This tale of a couple's suicide pact lacks the pleasures of previous issues. Becky Cloonan's art, here combining photo-realism with cute, broadly painted faces is effective and at times striking, far surpassing Brain Wood's weak writing. We're never given a way to understand the source of their suicidal ideation, and the bad, wannabe poetic narration makes it a difficult and frustrating read. Lines lack rhythmic metre, frequently do not flow and are burdened by cliché. A poorly written issue and a disappointing finish to a memorable if uneven series. (IM) 4



<-> After last issue's comedy, Brian Wood goes all gooey and romantic portraying an infatuated young couple wandering the streets hand in hand to Wood's poetic monologue. It's rather soppy, but demonstrates his willingness to experiment with styles with this series. Becky Cloonan displays her skills with suitably measured artwork, but the creators show their abilities by swapping roles for an extra-short story of alienated teens with mutant powers. (MAT) 6

Nantucket Brown Roasters – The Lady of Shadows

by Asala; House of Usher

A disabled woman imprisoned in an asylum has apocalyptic visions while a seemingly normal convenience store's trade is disturbed by a fight between some mysterious strangers. Jason Asala brings a gothic style to his tale for this quirky Halloween issue. Unfortunately his artwork is rather too heavily indebted to Mike Mignola. It's also rather difficult to see where his story is going, despite remaining intriguing. (MAT) 7

Nightmares & Fairy Tales 11

by Valentino & FSc; Slave Labour Graphics

<=> As homage to Bette Davis movies, Serena Valentino scripts a mysterious tale of the death of a sick woman who feared her nurse was killing her, plotting to steal her husband. When they marry after the wife's death, the daughter inherits the paranoia. Serina Valentino does a terrific job of paying tribute without feeling like she's mugging, and while rushed the plot leaves me on tenterhooks with the first half's ending. Though this is a book I read for the writing, FSc's pencils are spirited and haunting and capitalise on the black and white art to intensify the story's creepiness. (IM) 7

Ojo 4

by Kieth & Wisnia; Oni Press

<=> Confused kid Annie has trouble enough after loosing her mother and dealing with a bullying teenage sister without worrying about caring for the odd squiggle creature she names Ojo and its ravenous (and much larger) mother. Sam Kieth lovingly brings his eccentric mind to the lives and worries of the young girl and her pet monster, bringing her nightmares and charming observations to life on the page with his and co-artist Chris Wisnia's distinctive inky style. (MAT) 7

Scared! – How To Draw Fantastic Horror Comic Characters

by Miller & Baugh; Watson-Guptill Publications; $19.95

This review might be too late for Halloween, but this book is good any time of the year. Authors Steve Miller and Bryan Baugh – accompanied by such top artists as Arthur Adams, Brett Booth, Frank Cho, and Roger Cruz – take us through the drawing techniques of horror. This also does what so few how-to books do, by providing a clear insight of the genre it discusses and is indebted to. While some how-to guides can be guilty of padding, this certainly isn't one of them! (CEB) 8

The Shaolin Cowboy 1

by Darrow; Burlyman Press

Geof Darrow returns to comics and his wandering kung-fu cowboy in a dystopian future, published by the Wachowski brothers' new company. Darrow shows his skill at producing intricately detailed panels and busy character designs that were so skilfully realised on the *Matrix* films. However, in his time away he appears to have forgotten how to craft a story within the confines of a 31-page comicbook, with this issue's extended fight scene and 10-page panel a prime example. (MAT) 7

Silent Hill: Among the Damned

by Ciencin & Thomas; IDW

The fates of a troubled ex-soldier and a disturbed pop diva converge in this 48-page £4.99 one-shot based on the Japanese video game horror series. However, the only horrific thing here is the script, alongside the poor visual storytelling, though the whole sorry affair is saved somewhat due to the startling graphics and high production values. Not unlike Bill Sienkiewicz's spontaneous linework, but married here to digital techniques, the accomplished visuals ably recreate the games' depraved imager and menacing tone. (JE) 4

Simpsons Comics 85

by Verrone & Ortiz + Escobar + various; Bongo Comics

Two terrific Patric M. Verrone-scripted tales that are uncannily close in tone and appearance to the cartoon show. At the San Diego Comic-Con, Matt Groening himself spent time away from his jam-packed signing sessions to oversee the Bongo booth, showing the strong and valued connection between them. (CEB) 7

Thieves & Kings 45

by Oakley; I Box Publishing

<=> Another emotional issue, as the innocent Jale fights the dark sorceress Soracia over the revelations about her destiny, while bumbling wizard Quentin brings out Soracia's caring side. Creator Mark Oakley grapples with the emerging themes of fate, purpose and caring which elevate this fantasy series above the usual hack and slash. One can see the influence of manga maestro Hiro Myasaki in Oakley's sketchy yet detailed panels and his humanist philosophy wrapped in a fairytale adventure. (MAT) 8

UK Newsstand

Action Man 120

by Jones & Griffiths; Panini Comics

<=> There's trouble in Tokyo as Action Man – on his new Turbo Bike – runs into Dr X and No-Face. But at 210 miles per hour, Action Man should be more than fast enough to out-manoeuvre them. Posters, puzzles and cool competitions round out the rest of this ever-slick comic based on the British action toy icon. (CEB) 8

Avengers United 48

by various; Marvel Collectors' Edition/Panini UK

<-> Earth's mightiest rally their forces and fight back against Kang. Busiek's swansong, though largely enjoyable, has suffered from too many disparate elements and interludes. The fact that events have had no impact on other titles, when storylines such as *Maximum Security* and *Onslaught* have, further diminishes its epic nature. (KM) 7

Doctor Who Magazine 352

by various; Panini UK

<+> In anticipation of the forthcoming TV series, DWM regenerates with a new logo and look, plus an increase to 68 pages. The penultimate episode of *The Flood* suggests the Cybermen will again be responsible for the Doctor's own regeneration. A great time to hop on board, whether you're a new – or lapsed – fan. (KM) 8

Judge Dredd The Megazine 227

by various; Rebellion

<+> An assortment of new stories takes the Megazine into an upswing, with a comedy Judge Dredd story, *Fat Christmas*; something terribly rude written by John Smith and beautifully painted by Colin MacNeil in *Devlin Waugh: Vile Bodies*; and The Bogie Man's Megazine debut in *Casablanca*. Newly-emerged from a coma, Judge Anderson also

begins a new adventure in *Lock-in*, while Young Middenface continues his escape from Kreeler-controlled Edinburgh. (DK) 7

Marvel Rampage 3

by various; Panini UK

<=> Judging by writer Mitchel Scanlon and artist John Royle's take on Daredevil, they would be the ideal creative team should Panini ever give DD his own comic. Over in Wolverine's high-octane adventure, drawn by hot new find Paul Marshall, Magneto and Mystique lay a trap. There's also a terrific Mini Marvel Toons strip, and a stunning Hulk poster among the many pages of interest and enjoyment. (CEB) 8

<-> Daredevil features in a race against time to save the Kingpin's life, while Magneto and Mystique attempt to lure Wolverine to the "dark side". The weakest narratives so far may appeal to the seven to nine age range, but highlight the limitations of a standalone six-page strip. The cover confusingly features Hulk, who doesn't appear in either story! (KM) 5

The Mighty World of Marvel Volume 3 #25

by various;
Marvel Collectors' Edition/Panini UK

<=> Welcome additions to the regular Daredevil/ Hulk line-up this issue are Ant Man II by Michelinie, Byrne & Layton and Dr Strange vs Dormammu by Lee and Ditko. MWOM continues to be an interesting spotlight on Marvel's varied history and characters...and great value for money. (KM) 7

2000 AD Prog 1419

by various; Rebellion

<-> The last part of the Judge Dredd story *Total War* is this Prog's strongest suit, as all stories are brought to a tidy conclusion in anticipation of the triple-sized Christmas Prog 2005. Most readers had already given up on *Faces* anyway. *The Red Seas, Meanwhile...* went for a *canis ex machina* ending; but *Lobster Random* excelled with an explosive double-length final episode. (DK) 7

2000 AD Prog 2005

by various; Rebellion

<=> Judge Dredd saw a better than average seasonal case in *Christmas With the Blints*, despite the nondescript visualisation of Brit-Cit. In *Caballistics Inc.*, Gordon Rennie and Dom Reardon delighted readers with their *Weird War Tales*. *Slaine* was rather a grand mess, while *Second City Blues* was *just* a mess. Honourable mentions to *Sinister/ Dexter*, *Tales of the Leviathan*, *Robo-Hunter* and *Nikolai Dante* for what was a good Christmas Prog overall. (DK) 7

Small Press

Best of Eagle Flies Again 1

by Wheeler, Freeman & Winders;
£3.25 from I. Wheeler
54 Hartwith Drive
Harrogate HG3 2UY
eaglefliesagain@hotmail.com

Increasingly popular fanzine E.F.A. has so much in each issue that doing a Best Of seems a very logical step to take. Here, we're treated to an assortment of highlights, including interviews with Gerry Embleton, David Hunt, Ian Kennedy, Pat Mills, Alan Grant and many more. With a cover by Liam Sharp, and the same solid interior design work as the regular title, this has plenty going for it. (CEB) 7

Dog's Breath Presents – Whistler

by Bolt-01; £2 from D. Evans;
whistlerstrip@aol.com

An A5 *Strontium Dog* fan comic by accomplished small press artist and *Solar Wind* contributor Bolt-01. Whistler is a mutant bounty hunter and a reluctant killer. Richmond Clements's text story raises a smile, sticking closely to its source material and not overreaching itself to deliver an astounding twist. Of Whistler's story, Chapter 6 is the best, in which a downbeat ending is reached with admirable economy and considerable pathos. (DK) 6

Mistakes and Regrets

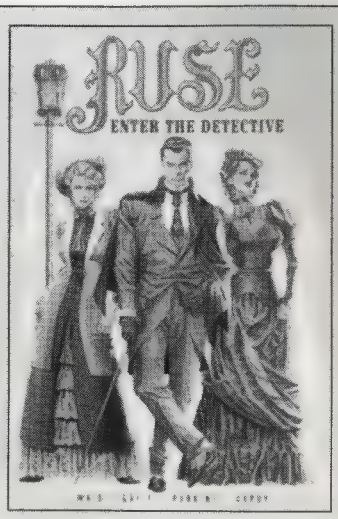
by O'Moore;
£1.00 from L. O'Moore
145 Clydesdale Road
Byker NE6 2EQ.
tgtokyo@animail.net

Leonie O'Moore, best known for her small press sea monsters, tackles human relationships in this highly ambitious outing. It's a flip comic, each half dealing with one side of a very two-sided situation. It weaves together to form a successful whole, with nice art, great dialogue and fantastic little touches throughout. A steal at only £1.00! (CEB) 7

Ruse 1: Enter the Detective

by Waid & Guice + Perkins;
CrossGen; $15.95

This engaging paperback – priced around £10.95 in the UK – collects issues one to six Ruse, chronicling the adventures of publisher CrossGen's Sherlock Holmes-styled detective, the aloof Simon Archard, and his long-suffering assistant, Emma – who herself secretly wields a mystical power. Set in the fictional Victorian city of Partington, the realistic visuals are assured, elegant and polished; while the incredulous, albeit fairly lightweight mysteries owe more to the American pulps – and perhaps US TV – than they do to Conan Doyle. (JE) 7



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THE HOUSE OF HAMMER

Edited by DEZ SKINN

HOUSE OF HAMMER, voted "best UK comic" in both 1975 and 1976's Eagle Awards, not only introduced under 18s to Hammer horror films through full length comics adaptations, it was also the main showcase for UK comics talent. Within its pages, readers discovered the work of Brian Bolland, John Bolton, Dave Gibbons, Ian Gibson, David Lloyd and Angus McKie alongside established talents including Brian Lewis, Paul Neary and Steve Parkhouse plus US artists Neal Adams & Berni Wrightson and many, many more. Rediscover the world of Hammer in strips and features through these original first edition classics

HoH 1 .....£7.50/$11.50

Cover: Joe Petagno. *Strips:* **Dracula** (Skinn & Neary), **Terror Tale** (Steve Moore & Angus McKie), Kronos Pt 1 (S Moore & Ian Gibson). *Key feature:* Christopher Lee filmography

HoH 7 .....£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Brian Lewis. *Strips:* **Twins of Evil** (Bolton & Gallagher), **Terror Tale** (S Moore). *Features:* writers: Brosnan, Gifford on Boris Karloff, Vahimagi. The Omen preview

HoH 8 .....£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Brian Lewis. *Strips:* **Quatermass Xperiment** (Lilley + Aldrich & Lewis), **Shandor** (S Moore & Bolton), **Terror Tale** (Adrian & Colquhoun). *Features:* Brosnan, Crawley, Gifford

HoH 9 .....£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Brian Lewis. *Strips:* **Quatermass Xperiment** (Lilley + Aldrich & Lewis), **Terror Tale** (Steve Moore & Baikie). *Feature writers:* Brosnan, Crawley, Fleming, Vahimagi.

HoH 11.....£7.50/$11.50

Cover: Lewis. *Strips:* **The Gorgon** (Scott Goodall & Garry Leach), **Terror Tale** (S Moore & Lewis). *Features:* Ray Harryhausen on Clash of the Titans, Peter Cushing Gallery, Gifford, Lofficier, Muriel etc

HoH 13 .....£7.50/$11.50

Cover: Lewis. *Strips:* **Plague of the Zombies** (S Moore & Garry Leach), **Terror Tale** (Parkhouse & Lewis). *Key features:* Star Wars preview, zombie movies by Alan Frank, J M Lofficier

HoH 14 .....£7.50/$11.50

Cover: Lewis. *Strip:* **One Million Years BC** (S Moore & Bolton). *Key features:* George Pal interview and John Carradine interviews. *Features:* Alan Jones, J M Lofficier, Brosnan, Crawley etc

HoH 15 .....£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Lewis. *Strips:* **The Mummy's Shroud** (Neal Adams & Jackson), **Terror Tale** (Christie Gibbons). *Features:* Rollerball interview, Mummy films, Alan Frank, John Brosnan, etc

HoH 18 .....£7.50/$11.50

Cover: Bill Phillips. *Strips:* **Dracula Frankenstein & the Werewolf** (Neal Adams & Dick Giordano), **Terror Tale** (Aviano & Sola). *Key features:* Peter Cushing interview, History of Hammer

HoH 19 .....£7.50/$11.50

Cover: Ramon Sola. *Strips:* **The Reptile** (S Moore & Lewis), **Terror Tale** (Parkhouse). *Features:* Cushing checklist, History of Hammer Pt 2, Alan Frank, Fleming, Vahimagi, Crawley, etc...

HoH 21 .....£5.00/$7.50

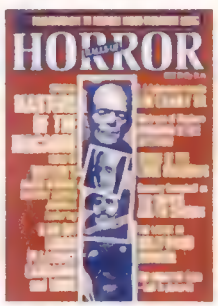
Cover: Vallejo. *Strips:* **Shandor** (S Moore & Bolton), **Terror Tale** (Wrightson). *Features:* Christopher Lee interview, History of Hammer pt 4. *Writers:* Brosnan, Frank, Sheridan etc

HoH 22 .....£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Lewis. *Strips:* **The Mummy** (S Moore & Jackson), **Terror Tale** (Parkhouse & Gallagher). *Features:* Mummy films, Warlords of the Deep. *Writers:* Brosnan, Gifford, Sheridan

HoH 23 .....£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Kenner. *Strips:* **Quatermass II** (Parkhouse & Lloyd), **Terror Tale** (S Moore & Gibbons). *Features:* Dario Argento interview, 3D movies. *Writers:* Gifford, Jones, Sheridan, etc



HoH 26 .....£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Leach. *Strip:* **Monster Club** (Skinn & Bolton/Lloyd). *Features:* Aviation of Lee Charles, St Pete Walker & Barbara Steele filmographies, Ramsey Campbell, Steven Jones

HoH 27 .....£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Mick Austin. *Strip:* **Brides of Dracula** (S Moore & J Stokes). *Features:* Video horror A-Z (800+ listings), History of Hammer pt 7, Ramsey Campbell, Randy Palmer...

HoH 29 .....£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Gary Ward. *Strip:* **Terror Tale** (Vahimagi & Lewis). *Features:* After Mad Max (by Kim Newman), History of Hammer 9, Steve Jones, Ramsey Campbell, Randy Palmer...

STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION CINEMA AND COMICS

Edited by DEZ SKINN

Launched as a companion title to House of Hammer in 1977, **Starburst** added the luxury of some colour interior pages to the comics and film features mix, focusing on science fiction in film and TV. The country's longest running SF media magazine, it is still being published, having recently celebrated its 300th issue! While comic strips have long since disappeared from the format, we still have copies available of the very earliest issues, setting the standard for SFX and all that followed.

Starburst 1 ...£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Lewis. *Strips by* Lewis, Gibbons & Sydney Jordan (**Jeff Hawke**). *Features:* Harryhausen short story, The writers guide, Making of Star Wars, feature, Brosnan

Starburst 2 ...£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Space Cruiser Yamato. *Strips by* Starlin & Sydney Jordan (**Jeff Hawke**). C-3PO/Tony Daniels interview, Wizards, The Prisoner, Ray Bradbury on CE3K

Starburst 3 ...£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Close Encounters. *Features:* John Baxter on CE3K, Harrison Ford interview, History of SF movies (Brosnan), Star Trek the movie, Superman, Logan's Run

Starburst 5 ...£5.00/$7.50

Cover: Superman. *Features:* Dark Star, Doug Trumbell interview, Battlestar Galactica, Lucas & Spielberg, Star Dust, Metal Messiah...

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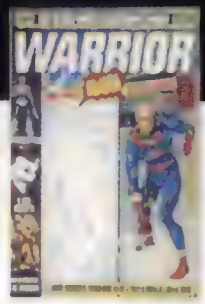
WARRIOR

Edited by
DEZ SKINN

WARRIOR, possibly the best British comics anthology of the 1980s, introduced a host of new readers to an alternative way of producing comics. The greatest showcase for creators and creations, its writers, artists and characters revolutionised both the US and the UK industry during its multi-award winning 26 issue run.

All issues offered for sale are original first editions from over 20 years ago.

Warrior 1 .. £5.00/$7.50
Cover: Steve Dillon. **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **Spiral Path** (Parkhouse), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Shandor** (S Moore + Bolton), **Prester John** (S Moore + Bolton + Gibbons short story



Warrior 2 ..£4.00/$6.00
Cover: Garry Leach. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Leach), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **The Spiral Path** (Parkhouse), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Shandor** (S Moore + Bolton), **Madman** (Neary + Baikie pinup

Warrior 3 ..£4.00/$6.00
Cover: Paul Neary. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Leach), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **The Spiral Path** (Parkhouse), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Shandor** (S Moore + Bolton), **Madman** (Neary), **Zirk** (Bellamy

Warrior 4 ..£5.00/$7.50
Cover: Dave Gibbons. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Neary + Davis + Dillon), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Jackson), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Spiral Path** (Parkhouse), **Shandor** (S Moore + Jackson), **Madman** (Neary), **Golden Amazon**

Warrior 5 ..£4.00/$6.00
Cover: Sienkiewicz. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Neary + Davis + Dillon), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Jackson), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Leach), **Spiral Path** (Parkhouse), **Shandor** (S Moore + Jackson), **Madman** (Neary), **Golden Amazon**

Warrior 6 ..£4.00/$6.00
Cover: Steve Parkhouse. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis + Leach), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Spiral Path** (Parkhouse), **Shandor** (S Moore + Jackson), **Madman** (Neary + Austin)

Warrior 7 .. £5.00/$7.50
Cover: Mick Austin. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis + Leach), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Spiral Path** (Parkhouse), **Shandor** (S Moore + Jackson), **Madman** (Neary + Austin)

Warrior 8 ..£4.00/$6.00
Cover: Dave Jackson. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Spiral Path** (Parkhouse), **Shandor** (S Moore + Jackson), **Stir Crazy** (Hunt Emerson)

Warrior 9 ..£4.00/$6.00
Cover: Mick Austin. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Spiral Path** (Parkhouse & Ridgway), **Shandor** (S Moore + Jackson), **Warpsmith** (A Moore + Leach)

Warrior 10 . £4.00/$6.00
Cover: Garry Leach. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Spiral Path** (Parkhouse & Ridgway), **Shandor** (S Moore + Jackson), **Warpsmith** (A Moore + Leach)

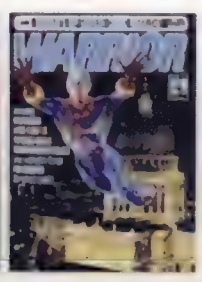
Warrior 11 . £3.50/$5.00
Cover: Garry Leach. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **The Spiral Path** (Parkhouse & Ridgway), **Legend of Prester John** (S Moore + Stokes)

Warrior 12 . £3.50/$5.00
Cover: Parkhouse. *Features:* **Young Marvelman** (A Moore + Ridgway), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Austin), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Spiral Path** (Parkhouse & Ridgway), **Prester John** (S Moore + Stokes), **Bojeffries** (A Moore

Warrior 13 . £3.50/$5.00
Cover: Leach. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **Zirk** (Henry + Leach), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Bojeffries Saga** (A Moore & Parkhouse), **The Shroud** (Parkhouse & Ridgway), **Shandor** (S Moore & Jackson)

Warrior 14 . £3.50/$5.00
Cover: Jim Baikie. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **Shandor** (S Moore & Jackson), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Twilight World** (S Moore & Baikie), **Ektryn** (Henry & Cam Kennedy)

Warrior 15 . £3.50/$5.00
Cover: Mick Austin. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Twilight World** (S Moore & Baikie), **Shandor** (S Moore + Jackson), Steve Moore feature



Warrior 16 . £3.50/$5.00
Cover: Mick Austin. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **Pressbutton** (Henry + Dillon), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Shandor** (S Moore + Jackson), **Twilight World** (S Moore & Baikie), Dez Skinn feature

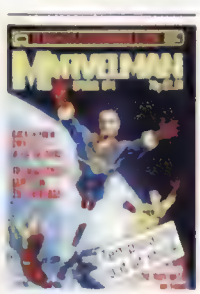
Warrior 17 . £3.50/$5.00
Cover: David Jackson. *Features:* **Marvelman Family** (A Moore + Ridgway), **Shandor** (S Moore + Jackson), **Twilight World** (S Moore & Baikie), **Home is the Sailor** (Parkhouse & Ridgway), Alan Moore + V for Vendetta feature

Warrior 18 . £3.50/$5.00
Cover: Steve Parkhouse. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Demon at the Gates** (Parkhouse), **Shandor** (S Moore & Jackson), **One Man's Meat** (Asbury), Garry Leach draw-no feature

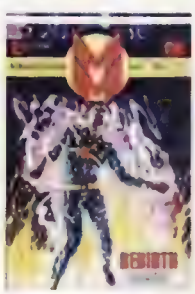
Warrior 19 £7.50/$11.50
Cover: Leach. *Features:* **Big Ben** (Skinn + Simpson), **The BoJeffries Saga** (A Moore & Parkhouse), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Shandor** (A Moore & Jackson), **Swordspell** (A Beech & Jackson), Mick Austin feature

Warrior 22 £3.50/$5.00
Cover: Geoff Senior. *Features:* **The Liberators** (Skinn + Ridgway), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Bogey** (Segura + Sanchez), **Big Ben** (Skinn + Simpson), Frank Bellamy interview

Warrior 23 £3.50/$5.00
Cover: Geoff Senior. *Features:* **The Liberators** (Skinn + Ridgway), **V for Vendetta** (A Moore + Lloyd), **Bogey** (Segura + Sanchez), **Big Ben** (Skinn + Simpson), Brian Bolland interview



Marvelman Special #1 (1984) ..... £5.00/$7.50
Cover: Mick Austin. *Features:* **Marvelman** (A Moore + Davis), **Marvelman Family** (Angie + Lawrence), **Marvelman** (Angie + Parker), **Big Ben** (Henry + Gibson



Miracleman 1 £2.50/$4.00
Cover: Garry Leach. *Features:* Colourised reprints of Marvelman from Warrior #1 (A Moore + Leach) and **Marvelman Special** (A Moore + A Davis + Angie + Lawrence)

Pressbutton 1 £2.50/$4.00
Cover: Brian Bolland. *Features:* Colourised reprints of Pressbutton from **Warrior** #1-3 (P Henry & Dillon) and **Zirk** from **Warrior** #3 (P Henry + Brian Bolland)

Pressbutton 3 £2.00/$3.00
Cover: Alan Davis. *Features:* Colourised reprints of Pressbutton **Warrior** #7-9 (P Henry & Dillon), **Ektryn** (P Henry + Kennedy), **Shroud, Spire & Stars** (Parkhouse & Ridgway)

Pressbutton 4 £2.00/$3.00
Cover: Mick Austin. *Features:* Colourised reprints of Pressbutton **Warrior** #10-11, 20 (P Henry & Dave Gibbons), **Ektryn** (P Henry + Kennedy), **Zirk** (Henry & Leach)

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Letters

CI, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (editorial@comicsinternational.com)

Distribution

David Atkins via e-mail:
david.atkins16@btinternet.com

I HAVE a regular order for **Comics International** with my local comics stall, but now have a gripe about distribution. For some time now I have been calling in on the stall for my copy of **CI**, only to be told that it had not yet arrived. On January 12th I called on him and received the December '04, Christmas issue and Jan '05 issues all in one go.

One of the sections I first look at in **CI** is the competition (I remember the long, drawn-out saga when I won the Brian Talbot/ **Heart of Empire** comp... yes, it is I! Months of waiting for the prize to arrive, happy when it did and not a whine of complaint (but then I am the original Walter the Softie!).

However, my mild, Clark Kent-ish exterior was ruffled when, because of this delay in distribution, I missed the chance to enter the **DC Comics Encyclopaedia** competition. Worse was to come as the Bruce Banner in me got angry when I realised that I had missed the *Hellboy/Punisher* competition too... I really, REALLY would have liked to enter that one. Boy was I angry! And you don't want to make me angry!

So why is it that I often have to wait, and wait... and wait... until my dealer finally gets delivery of **CI**? I know you'll probably recommend subscription, but I am a firm believer in supporting the little guy who runs the market stall.

So where can I get a shirt that stretches with me when I go green?

You're right, I was about to recommend a subscription, but your support of "the little guy" is to be applauded. Sadly, that adjective may also be the problem... little.

Because we only self-distribute one title every four weeks, unlike Diamond with its hundreds of titles, we impose a 25-copy minimum. This way our free-of-charge courier delivery is somewhat absorbed. The chances are your "little guy" can't sell the 15 out of 25 to cover buying direct from us and includes a smaller order with his Diamond delivery. Diamond, in turn, cannot be expected to get product out to shops the day after receipt from the printers, because of the sheer volume. With one title, we can.

Having said that, generally they do ship a week after us, so you may want to either visit your little guy more often or ask him why he got two issues at once. It certainly isn't down to us! ... Dez Skinn

Mad logos

David Robinson via e-mail:
david.robinson@idealshoppingdirect.co.uk

GOOD editorial *[Sez Dez*, #180]. Dez's question regarding comic-book logos, "Have people forgotten all this stuff, or has nobody ever told them?" is partly rhetorical. You may agree (or, at least, suspect) that some recent practitioners haven't, in fact, been taught all the tricks of the trade.

With the demise of substantial comics 'houses' like IPC, the degree of experience and expertise is almost certain to have become watered down. This persists across industries, where companies can no longer afford to run apprenticeship schemes. (One example is the advent of desktop computers, where the 'new breed' of designers and programmers effectively re-learned the problems posed by leap years, and all the other old mistakes which their 'mainframe' fore-runners had already undergone.)

You mention the need for a distinctive logo. Anecdotally, when Egmont Fleetway merged with London Editions in the early 1990s, the incumbant MD John Davidge 'inherited' British **MAD**, the shape of whose title lettering dated back to Harvey Kurtzman.

JD stated that he hated the logo, which he thought archaic, and took it to be representative of the **MAD** approach at that time. Dummy covers for attempted **MAD** redesigns picked up **MAD**'s original comicbook logo, which was white, sharp-edged and more akin to the **VIZ** look. In any case, Fleetway Editions dropped the **MAD** licence at the end of that year. (US **MAD** has since "modernized" the lettering, by placing it in italics!)

By the way, British **MAD** has popped up recently in a few local newsagents. I'm wondering if this is as a result of a concerted push?

And, yes, the cover of **CI** does tend to look distinctive from issue to issue, avoiding the problem of "Have I seen this one already?".

Your excellence with logos I've commended before.

Logos 2

Mike Kazybrid
2 Renshaw Road, Sheffield S11 7PD

ENJOYED Dez's editorial about cover logos. It's true that DC always had the more interesting ones! And with regards to the comment about artwork not allowing enough masthead space – while not a comic, I recall getting strange looks in Egypt when carrying around a copy of **SFX**.

Wasn't my fault that the sci-fi 'babe' on the cover hid the bottom part of the middle letter!

*...which gets my vote for the best/most crass bit of marketing of that year, always having the **SFX** logo part-covered and reading more like **SEX**. There was a similar, albeit accidental, incident back in 1980 on an SF media magazine. I'd handed over the editing of **Starburst** to my long-suffering assistant Alan MacKenzie, who wanted to make it his own and give it a sales boost. So he had the cover logo redesigned, repeating it as a reduced header on each page, and gave his first issue a "Fantastic Fantasy Femmes" theme. Fair enough. Except for the error the art studio made with the spelling of the logo, which wasn't noticed in time. All copies of said issue carried the title **Starbust**.*

Strangely appropriate, no?

Warhammer/Inferno!

Danny Gold via e-mail

I'VE just read the strangest reason for cancelling titles on Games Workshop's website:

"Due to the runaway success of the Black Library's novel ranges, the ever-expanding Black Flame lines and the demands that these make on our limited resources, we have had to make a difficult, yet necessary, choice regarding **Warhammer Monthly** and **Inferno!**

"As we can no longer give these publications the time or attention they deserve, we have made the decision to stop publishing these products. **Warhammer Comic** 86 (cover date December 2004) and **Inferno!** 46 (cover date January 2005) will be the final issues."

So, after seven or so years, they are killing the only UK outlets for talented writers and artists outside of the **2000 AD** world because they don't have time to do them?!

Call me a cynic, but that's the worst excuse I've heard since Alan Moore justified going back to DC by saying he was actually working for WildStorm.

CGI potential

Paul Dale Robert via e-mail:
JazmaPika@cs.com

AMAZING things are happening in the comicbook world and in Hollywood. Now that CGI (Computer Graphic Imaging) is coming to perfection, movies like *Hulk* can be made with ease.

I'm now waiting for that Silver Surfer movie, which would be a prime example of using CGI.

I am not surprised to hear that Reginald Hudlin, maker of the 1990 movie *House Party*, is teaming up with John Romita Jr to revamp Black Panther and make

Mike Kazybrid's COMIC CUTS

SEE YOU TONIGHT, BIG BOY! YOU BRING THE CHOCS WITH THE SOFT CENTRES, AND I'LL BRING THE WOOLLY COMBINATIONS. KISS, KISS!
DON'T SAY IT! IT HAPPENS TO BE A RELATIONSHIP BASED ON HONESTY, TRUTH AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE OTHER!
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Send your script ideas to the above address and you receive the original art if yours is published.

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him a heavy hitter in the Marvel Universe.

On another note, thank you for the update on the new Concrete series, **Strange Armor**. I have always been a fan of Concrete and it will be nice to see the big guy come out of limbo.

Agreed, On both counts. Especially the Surfer movie comment. Ever since Terminator 2's visuals of a silver/mercury-like human I've been holding my breath.

In with a Chance

Jose Alvarez
45 Coronation Road, Basingstoke

AS USUAL, this excellent periodical provided me with as much enjoyment as my entire monthly selection of comics. I especially like *Networks*, as this keeps those of us without access to the Internet up to speed with what's been going on.

I also found myself agreeing to a degree with J.J. Chance's letter about Warren Ellis's work in the *Letters* column – pseudonym or not. Although it was vindictive to criticise one specific writer I do feel it embodied a lack of faith we the fans have at present felt with the stagnation of many titles.

There are a bunch of big-name writers who are either trading on past glories or have reached a position of such importance to their publisher that the wealth of titles they are offered forces them to spread themselves too thinly.

Bendis's current **Avengers** run is very poor compared to his fantastic work on **Daredevil**. It is debatable whether he is actually writing this nonsense. Mark Millar too has peddled some stinkers of late, his **Marvel Knights Spider-Man** felt mediocre compared to his wonderul work on **The Ultimates**.

But I found Dez's editorial rebuke to Mr Chance's letter more concerning, since it read like too much of an apology to the wounded party, Warren Ellis. Dez knows a letter with this sentiment will produce a healthy debate, so why the backpeddle?

Additionally not only did Dez seem to put forth an underlying notion that any form of criticism of the medium is overall detrimental, the Reviews slated the most recent issue of **Ultimate Nightmare**.

Dez, I know it would be lovely to live in a world where all the British titles of yesteryear were still available but that's not the case, and no matter how optimistic and enthusiastic we are about our hobby we should still be selective, and moreso when the expense of purchasing one title means you may not buy another.

Frankly without such questions being asked we all deserve the stagnant titles we are offered be it Claremont on **Uncanny X-Men**, or Bendis on **The Pulse**.

What is the opposite of pearls before swine? Oh yes, bringing Hal Jordan back from the dead...

San Diego

Wayne Clarke via e-mail:
wclark1@btopenworld.com

I AM planning to go to the San Diego Comic Con for the first time in 2005. Are any other **CI** readers or columnists thinking of going?

If so, perhaps we could arrange to meet during the Con? Please feel free to e-mail me directly if you want to discuss further.

You should have no problem spotting fellow Brit fans in San Diego, Wayne. All you have to do is step outside of the huge Convention Center and you'll see a clutch of them littering the streets with their cigarette ash. Last time I went, there were four smokers out there – all from the UK. When another attendee stepped out for a smoke, I called out, having just observed what rebels we Brits must appear in the eyes of clean-living Californians, asking if he too was from the UK. "Nah, 'Stralia," he answered.

"Close enough," was my retort, welcoming him into our throng.

Reminisces

Mike Cruden via e-mail:
mcruden@btinternet.com

MUCH amused by Dez's 'Dads' Club' editorial [**CI** #178]! Been there, done that, and am still friends with the same bunch of dads (some now grandads! Not me, not yet!) 20 years later.

Also enjoyed the Scarborough reminiscences *[Sez Dez* #175].

Exactly the same with me, but in Whitby, where I found a little newsagents with dozens of full colour US comics, as opposed to the all of a sudden drab-looking Oz reprints. But they were a whole 3d more! This would be early 1960, I'd guess, and I scrounged pocket money off all my relatives who accompanied us on that holiday to buy as many as I could.

And then read them to death!

Scoring Charlie

Chris Smillie via e-mail:
superherostore@yahoo.com

IF **Charley's War** (Titan Books) only merits a 9 out of 10 (**CI** #180, *Reviews)*, what in its genre would get the 10/10? **Combat Colin**? **Sergeant Fury and his Howlin' Commandos**?

*OK, this one could run and run. While scoring is down to the individual reviewer, personally I'd throw in genre-wise Joe Sacco's **Palestine**, Harvey Kurtzman's 1950s EC war titles (**Two-Fisted Tales**, **Frontline Combat**), Archie Goodwin's Warren mag **Blazing Combat** and Joe Kubert's **Fax from Sarajevo** as good yardsticks. While Pat Mills' script for Charlie's War was exemplary, dear old Joe Colquhoun's art did veer a little too close to cartoony compared with the likes of Torres, Kubert, et al in the above examples.*

Had Eric Bradbury, Ian Kennedy or Brian Lewis drawn it (Fleetway mainstays all), I'd have to agree it would merit a perfect 10. But then, that's only one man's opinion.

Directory

An at-a-glance reference guide to everything that counts in comics

Internet Listings

Comics creators

Jessica Abel ..... www.artbabe.com
Neal Adams ..... www.nealadams.com
Kyle Baker ..... www.kylebaker.com
Leo Baxendale ..... www.reaper.co.uk/main.htm
Brian Bolland Art ..... www.velouria.com/Bolland
Mark Bright ..... www.mdbright.com
Eddie Campbell ..... www.eddiecampbellcomics.com
John Cassaday ..... www.johncassaday.com
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imp	= air imported new issues	ind	= independent comics
back	= back issues stocked	u/g	= underground comix
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tpbk	= trade paperbacks	RPG	= role playing games
STO	= standing order service (new comics reserved)	CCG	= customisable card games
		merch	= trading cards, videos, t-shirts, posters, etc
s-p	= small press and fanzines		

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Forbidden Planet, 44 The Priory Centre, Dartford, Kent DA1 2HS. Mon-Wed 10.30-5.30; Thurs-Sat 10-5.30 (back, gn, ind, PRG, CCG, merch) 01322 224837

Incognito Comic Shop, 1-2 The Friars, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2AS. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film/TV) tel/fax: 01227 785898

Off World: The Sci-Fi Store, 142 Market Halls, Arndale Centre, Luton LU1 2TP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, STO, s-p, CCG, merch, Star Trek/Wars, sci-fi collectables) 01582 736256

Planet Ace, 324-325 Chartwell North, Top Floor, Victoria Plaza, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5SR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch) 01702 613021

Steve's Comics, The Bookstall, Beckenham Junction Station, Rectory Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1HY. Mon-Fri 6-7; Sat 7-5 (back – Marvel, DC – ind, British comics, tpbk) 07977 751442

Slough Computers, 50 Village Shopping Centre, Slough, Berks SL1 1HP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, STO, ind, cards, second hand video games) 01753 521594

Time Trek, 46 High Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1EG. Mon-Wed/Fri 9.30-5.30; Thurs 10-8; Sat 10-5.30; Sun 10-4 (imp, back, ind, gn, merch, STO, CCG, prl, sf TV/film) 020 8313 0677

Whatever Comics, 2 Burgate Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2HH. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, kits) 01227 453226

Whatever Comics, 5 Middle Row, High Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1TF. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, model kits) 01622 681041

Midlands

Abstract Sprocket, 29 St Benedicts Street, Norwich, Norfolk NR2 4PF. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01603 624410

Close Encounters, 59 Midland Road, Bedford MK10 1PW. Mon-Fri 10-6; Sat 9-6; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, gn, merch, video, DVDs, action figures, t-shirts, trading cards) 01234 270777

Comic Culture, The Mall, 257-259 High Street, Lincoln LN2 1HX. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, prl) 01522 546611

Forbidden Planet, 31 Cross Cheaping, Coventry CV1 1HF. Mon-Wed 9.30-6; Thurs 9.30-7; Fri-Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV) 02476 229672

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 129 Middle Walk, Broadmarsh Centre, Nottingham NG1 7LN. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV) 0115 958 4706

Forbidden Planet Superstore, 38 Priory Queensway, Birmingham B4 7LA. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs-Fri to 6) (imp, back, gn, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, books, games, mags, kits, toys, videos) 0121 236 3026

FPI Derby, 1/2 The Corn Exchange, Albert Street, Derby DE1 2DS. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, merch, rock/film TV memorabilia, video games) 01332 206606

FPI Hanley, 52 Stafford Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1JB. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01782 279294 fax: 202381

FPI Leicester, 23 Silver Street, Leicester LE1 5EU. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, foreign, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 01162 515266

FPI Nottingham, 19-23 Friar Lane, Nottingham NG1 6DA. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, foreign, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01159 484122

FPI Wolverhampton, 23 Victoria Street, Wolverhampton WV1 3NP. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01902 717440

Ground Zero, 9 Toothill Lane, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 1NJ. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, prl, CCG, merch, toys) 01623 622017

Nostalgia & Comics (FPI), 14-16 Smallbrook, Queensway, Birmingham. Mon-Thurs 9.15-5.45; Fri-Sat 9.15-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 0121 643 0143

Page 45, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY. Mon-Sat 9-6. (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, manga) 0115 950 8045

Phoenix Comix, 29 Abington Square, Northampton NN1 4AE. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, RPG, CCG, action figures) 01604 602311

Travelling Man, c/o Gamestation, 1st Floor, 6 East Street, Derby DE1. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures, fantasy books, film/TV) 0115 950 9231

Travelling Man, c/o Gamestation, 1st Floor, 16 Angel Row, Nottingham NG1 6HL. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures, miniatures) 0115 950 9231

North West

All-American, 102 Newport Street, Bolton BL3 6AB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, STO, merch, Star Wars, WWF, action figures, S/Age, videos, records, CDs) 01204 366553

Alpha Omega Comics, 33-35 Library Street, Wigan, Lancs WN1 1NN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, merch, videos) 07796 854644

Batcave, 39 Penny Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 6HQ. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, RPG, CCG, merch) 01254 667488

Forbidden Planet, 92 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY. Mon-Wed 9.30-5.30; Thurs 9.30-7; Fri-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV, sci-fi horror) 0151 707 1491

Forbidden Planet Megastore (FPI), 65 Oldham Street, Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1JR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (two floors; imp, back, STO, RPG, CCG, merch, books, toys, film and TV tie-ins, manga) 0161 839 4777

Imagination Station, 41 Bank St, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 8HJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch)

Millennium Comics, 4 Church Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5NT. Mon-Tues 10-5; Thurs-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, RPG, merch, action figures, toys) 01606 49255

Thunderbooks, 332 Lytham Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 1DW. Mon/Tues/Thurs-Sat (Sundays in June-Oct only) 10-5.30; Wed 1-3.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, media collectors' items) 01253 348321 fax: 407813

Thunderbooks II, 116 Friargate, Preston, Lancashire PR1 9EE. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, merch) 01772 204287

Time Tunnel, 13 Earle Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 2BS. Mon and Wed-Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, merch, film/TV memorabilia, action figures, videos, model kits) 01270 215496

Worlds Apart (FPI), 58-60 Lime Street (city centre), Liverpool. Mon-Sat 10-6; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film) 0151 707 0839

North East

Books 'N' Comics, Unit 15, Forbes Building, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS1 4AW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, merch, fantasy and film magazines, Doctor Who/Star Trek) 01642 249143

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 30 Eastgate, The Headrow, Leeds LS2 7JL. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, LF film books, film/TV mags, posters, toys, kits, trading cards, stills, Star Trek/Doctor Who) 0113 242 6325

Forbidden Planet, 59 Grainger Street, Newcastle NE1 5JE. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV mags, fantasy/sci-fi books, videos) 0191 261 9173

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 41 Dundas Street, Middlesbrough TS1 1HR. Mon-Wed 9.30-5.30; Thurs 9.30-7; Fri-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, gn, s-p, STO, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, video, action figures, film/TV, manga) 01642 248889

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 12 Matilda Street, off the Moor, Sheffield S1 4QD. Mon-Tues 10-5.30; Wed-Fri 10-6; Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, original art, model kits, sci-fi/fantasy books, horror magazines, newspaper strip books) 0114 276 9475

The Last Picture Show, 38-39 The Lanes, The Oasis, Meadowhall Centre, Sheffield S9 1EP. Mon-Thurs 10-8; Fri 10-9; Sat 9-7, Sun 11-5 (imp. back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV and rock memorabilia) 0114 256 9604 fax: 255 3399

Millennium Comics, Stall 141, Warrington Indoor Market. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, RPG, merch, action figures, toys) 01925 575657

Off-World Comics, 200 Park View, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear NE26 3QP. Mon-Tues/Thurs 10-5.30 (closed Wed); Fri 10-6; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, CCG, merch) 0191 251 2288

OK Comics, 19 Thorntons Arcade, Briggate, Leeds LS1 6LQ. (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl) 0113 2469366

Sheffield Space Centre, 33 The Wicker, Sheffield. Mon-Tues/Thurs-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, merch, Star Trek specialists) 0114 275 8905

Travelling Man, Unit 8/9, The Corn Exchange, Call Lane, Leeds LS1 7BR. Mon-Thurs 10-5.30; Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures) 0113 242 7227

Travelling Man, 54 Goodramgate, York YO1 2LF. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp,

back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures) 01904 628787

2Tone Comics, 40 Market Street, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 6AA. Sat-Sun 10.30-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, merch, CGC) 01422 845666

West Country

American Dream Comics, 72 Walcot Street, Bath BA1 5BD. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, original art, hobby kits, CDs) 01225 424881

American Graffiti, 78 Church Lane, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 1BH. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01271 325740

Area 51, 143 Gloucester Road, Bristol. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, original art) 0117 924 4655

Automattic Comics, Unit 2, 17 Pickwick Road, Corsham SN13 9BQ. Mon-Tues 12-5; Thurs-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01249 701647

Collector's Choice, 45 Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1TX. Mon-Sat 9-5 (S/Age, British comics/annuals, vintage mags, toys, memorabilia) 01452 410232

Forbidden Planet, 30 Penn Street, Bristol BS1 3AS. Mon-Wed 9.30-5.30; Thurs 9.30-7; Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV mags, subculture) 0117 929 8692

Forbidden Planet, 43-45 East Street, Southampton SO14 3HN. Mon-Wed 9.30-5.30; Thurs 9.30-6; Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV)023 80230991 fax: 230996

Ian's Books & Comics, 195a Albert Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO4 0JP (next to Tesco). Mon-Tues/Thurs-Fri 10.30-5.15 (Wed closed); Sat 10-5.15 (imp, back, tpbk, STO, s-p, prl, toys) 023 92422731

Kathies Comics, Unit BG29, Broadmead Gallery, The Galleries Shopping Centre, Bristol BS1 3XB. Mon-Wed/Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Thurs 9-6; Sun 11-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 0117 922 1170

Kathies Comics, 20 Market Avenue, Plymouth, PL1 1PH. Mon-Fri 9.30- 5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 01752 257800

Paradox Comics, 17 High St, Poole, Dorset BH15 1AB. Mon-Fri 10.30-5; Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, ind, merch, videos) 01202 661346

Wonderworld, 540 Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset. Mon-Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, CCG, merch, film/TV/media, beanie babies) 01202 394918

Wales

Cardiff's Comic Guru Presents!, 20-22 Wyndham Arcade, Cardiff CF10 1FJ. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs 10-9; Fri-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, CCG, merch) 029 2020 29119

Cardiff Fantasy Centre, 1st Floor, Jacobs Market, West Canal Wharf, Cardiff. Sat 9.30-4.30 (imp, back, STO; established over 20 years) 029 206 58184 (eves)

Comix Shoppe, 13 Shoppers Walk, Swansea SA1 3AY. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, anime, Games Workshop) 01792 642097

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 5 Duke Street, Cardiff. Mon-Wed 10-5.30; Thurs 10-6.30; Fri 10-5.30; Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, sci-fi fantasy/ horror books, Star Trek/Wars) 029 2020 28885

Negative Zone, Provision Market Gallery, High Street, Newport, Gwent NP9 1DD. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind; established for 12 years) 01633 222159

Scotland

Asylum Books & Games, 29 Adelphi, Aberdeen AB11 5B2. Mon 10-8; Tues-Wed 10-6; Thurs 10-8; Fri-Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, STO, new/ second hand RPG, CCG, books, original art) 01224 574637

Black Hole Comic Shop, Unit 3, 5 Victoria Road, Dundee DD1 1ER. Mon-Thurs 10-5; Fri-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, second hand records, CDs, videos) 01382 221037

City Centre Comics, 51 Parnie Street, Glasgow G1 5LU. Tues-Sat 10-5 (back) 0141 552 2208

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 12 Schoolhill, Aberdeen AB10 1JX. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs 10-7; Fri 10-6; Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, CCG, merch) 01224 622131

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 40-41 South Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1LL. Mon-Wed 10-5.30; Thurs 10-6.30; Fri-Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5. (imp, STO, s-p, ind, merch, foreign) 0131 558 8226

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 168 Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 2LW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 0141 331 1215

Justice Comics, Unit 36, The Arcade, Stirling FK8 1AX. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch) 01786 447687

Kapow!, 28 Allison Street, Govanhill, Glasgow G42 8NN (off Pollokshaws Rd). Tues-Sat 11-6 (buy and sell back, gn, ind, mags, videos, DVDs, new and second-hand books, merch) 0141 4241600

Plan 9, 9 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen AB25 1NE. Mon-Wed 10-5; Thurs 10-6; Fri-Sat 10-5; Sun 1-4. (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, WWF, merch, sci-fi) tel/fax: 01224 624467

Red Hot Comics, Block D Unit 7, Glenwood Business Park, Glenwood Place, Glasgow G45 9UH. Mon-Sat 11.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 0141 630 0049

Northern Ireland

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 52-54 Ann Street, Belfast BT1 4EG Mon-Wed 9-5.30; Thurs 9-8.30; Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Sun 1-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch) 028 90438744

Planet Ace Derry, 33 Shipquat St, Derry, Londonderry BT48 6DF. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) 02871 369787

Retail Index: USA

When telephoning from outside the USA, include the bracketed 00. Out-of-town US calls begin with the 1 prefix only. The following is a fraction of the estimated 3,000+ US comics stores.

Alabama

Optic Nerve, 1930 12th Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35205 (film, newsstand, ind) (00)1 205 933 2787

Alaska

Bosco's in Spenard, 2606 Spenard Road, Anchorage 99503. Mon-Sat 11-8, Sun 12-6 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, anime, merch) (00) 1 907 274 4112

Bosco's Diamond Centre, 800 East Diamond Boulevard, Anchorage 99577. Mon-Fri 10-9; Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, anime, games, Star Wars/Trek) (00) 1 907 344 3963

Bosco's in Eagle River, 11432 Business Boulevard, Eagle River. Mon-Sat 12-8, Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, merch) (00) 1 907 696 5166

Arizona

Lost Dutchman, 747 West Camelback Road, Phoenix, AZ 85013. Mon-Sun 10-7. (new, back) (00)1 619 278 0371

California

Comickaze, 5525 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, San Diego, CA 62117-2342. Mon-Fri 11-7; Sat 11-6; Sun 12-6 (new, back, CCG, merch)(00)1 858 278 0371

Comix Experience, 305 Divisadero Street, San Francisco, CA 94117. Mon-Sat 11-7; Sun 12-5 (new, back) (00)1 415 863 9258

Flying Colors Comics, 2980 Treat Blvd, Concord, CA 94518. Mon-Sat 11-7 (Fri until 8); Sun 12-6 (new, back, ind, cards, merch) (00)1 510 825 5410

Lee's Comics, Inc., 1020-F N Rengstorff Avenue, Mountain View, CA 94043. Mon-Sun 10-9 (new, back: 1930s to date, anime, manga, s-p, adult, merch) (00)1 650 965 1800

Lee's Comics, Inc., 2222 South El Camino Real, San Mateo, CA 94403. Mon-Sun 10-9, (new, back: 1930s to date, anime, manga, adult, s-p, merch) (00)1 650 571 1489

Meltdown Comics & Collectibles, 7522 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90046 (toys, comics, books) (00)1 323 851 7223

Stand-Up Comics, 10020 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530. Mon-Fri 11 7; Sat-Sun 11-6 (new, back, cards, anime, CCG, merch) (00)1 510 525 3344

Third Planet, 3822 Sepulveda Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90505. Sun-Thurs 11-8; Fri + Sat 11-9 (new, ind, back, CCG, RPG, GW, sci-fi/fantasy, anime, merch) (00)1 310 791 6227

Hawaii

Gecko Books & Comics, 3613 Waialae Avenue, Honolulu, 96816. Mon-Sun 9-9 (new, back, cards, toys, merch) (00)1 808 732 1292

Illinois

Comic Kingdom, 5941 W Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60634. (new, back) (00)1 773 545 2231

Louisiana

Comic Cosmos, 343 W Esplanade Avenue, Kenner, LA 70065. Mon-Thur 11.30-7, Fri-Sat 11-7.30, Sun 12-5 (new, back, cards, CCG, toys, anime) (00)1 504 286 0039

Crescent City Comics & Cards, 6111 Elysian Fields, New Orleans, LA 70122. Mon-Sat 11-7, Sun 12-6 (new, back, cards, CCG, RPG, anime) (00)1 504 286 0039

More Fun Comics, 8200 Oak Street, New Orleans, LA 70118. Tues-Sat 11-7, Sun-Mon 12-6 (new, back, cards, CCG, merch, toys, CDs) (00)1 504 865 1800

Maine

Casablanca Comics, 151 Middle Street, Portland, ME 04101. Mon-Sat 10-9, Sun 12-7 (new, back, cards, CCG, RPG, merch, art) (00)1 207 780 1676

Casablanca Comics, 778 Roosevelt Trail, Windham, ME 04062. Mon-Fri 11-7, Sat 10-6, Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, merch)(00)1 207 892 0056

Massachusetts

Comicopia, 464 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215. Mon-Sun 11-7 (Wed 10-8) (new, merch, CCG, manga, tpbk)(00)1 617 266 4266

Minnesota

Uncle Sven's Comic Shoppe, 1838 St Clair Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55105. Mon-Fri 3-6, Sat 11-4 (new, back, tpbk, gn, videos, action figures, CCG, RPG; est 19 years) (00)1 651 699 3409

New York State

Earthworld Comics, 327 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12206. Mon-Wed 11-6; Thur-Fri 11-7, Sat 11-6, Sun 12-5 (new, back, ind, manga/anime, cards, merch) (00)1 518 465 5495

Forbidden Planet (**FPI** associate), 840 Broadway (at 13th St, NY 10003. Mon-Sat 10-10; Sun 12-10. (new, ind, back, RPG, merch, fantasy) (00)1 212 473 1576

Jim Hanley's Universe Ltd, 4 West 33rd Street (opposite Empire State Building), NY 10001. Mon-Sat 9am-11pm; Sun 10-9. (Everything to do with comics) (00)1 212 268 7088

Jim Hanley's Universe Ltd, 325 New Dorp Lane, Staten Island, NY 10306. Mon-Sun; 12-9. (Everything to do with comics) (00)1 718 351 6299

Midtown Comics, 200 West 40th Street, NY 10018 (00)1 212 302-8192

Ohio

The Laughing Ogre, 4258 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43214. Mon-Sat 10-9; Sun 12-5 (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 614 267 6473

Oklahoma

Time Warp, 588 SE Washington Street, Bartlesville, OK 74006 (new, back, cards, games, toys, CDs, sci-fi/fantasy) (00)1 918 335 3373

Pennsylvania

Comic Castle, 17 West Fourth Street, Williamsport, PA 17703 Mon-Sun 10-9 (new, back) (00)1 717 322 8763

Golden Eagle, Berkshire Square, 1159 Berkshire Boulevard, Wyoming, PA 19610 (new, back, games, CCG, cards, Star Wars/Trek) (00)1 610 376 8255

Golden Eagle, Fairgrounds Square Mall, Reading, PA 19605 (new, back, games, CCG, cards, Star Wars/Trek) (00)1 610 921 3160

Tennessee

Collector's World, 1511 E Main Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37130. Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 615 895 1120

Collector's World, Hickory Plaza South Central, 5751 Nolensville Road, Nashville, TN 37211. Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 615 895 1120

Collector's World, 10820 Kingston Park #10, Knoxville, TN 37922 Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 423 675 6830

Collector's World, 4006 Granny White Park, Nashville, TN 37204 (new, back, CCG, merch)(00)1 615 385 8136

Texas

Cliff's Comics, 2205 West Berry Street, Fort Worth, TX 76110. (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 817 927 7172

Collectible Heroes, 502 West Calton Road #307, Laredo, TX 78041. Mon-Wed 2-7.30; Thurs-Sat 11.30-7.30 (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 956 791 8428

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy, 616 West 34th Street, Austin, TX 78705 (new, back, games, anime, miniatures, prl) (00)1 512 454 2399

Virginia

Thore Comics, 3514 Oaklawn Boulevard, Hopewell, VA 23860. Mon-Sat 11-7, (new, back, Silver Age, sci-fi, M:TG, cards, vinyl)(00)1 804 458 9561

Trilogy Shop, 700 E Little Creek Road, Norfolk, VA 23518. Mon-Fri 11-7, Sat 10-7, Sun 12-6 (new, back, merch) (00)1 757 587 2540

Wisconsin

Lost World of Wonders, 6713 West Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53219 (00)1 414 328 4651

Direct Market Retailers:

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Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International. Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail: comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk

The letters **(FPI)** after various entries indicates that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

Retailers: International

Australia

Arcadia Unbound, 267 Forest Road, Hurstville, NSW 2220. Mon-Fri 10.30-7, Sat 10-4, Sun 12-3 (imp, back, manga, merch, CCG) (0061) 2 9585 1489

Books & Bounties/Comics Haven, 157a Charters Towers Road, Townsville, Queensland 4812. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, gn, merch, RPG, CCG) (0061) 7 4779 2408

Fan Attic, 1st Floor, 91 Elizabeth Street, Brisbane, Queensland 4002. Mon-Sun 9.30-5.30 (toys, Star Wars, sci-fi collectibles) (0061) 7 3221 1420

Kinda Lotsa Comics and Stuff, Shop 4, 503-511 King Street, Newtown, Sydney, NSW. Mon-Sat 10.30-7.30 (back, toys, merch)(0061) 2 9565 1054

Known Space Books, 1st Floor, 108 Gawler Place, Adelaide, SA 5000. Wed-Sat 12-6 (US/UK back) (0061) 8 8223 4304

Phantom Zone, 23 Anderson Street, Chatswood, NSW 2067. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9411 3709

Phantom Zone, 198 Mann Street, Gosford, NSW 2250. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 43 25 4599

Phantom Zone, 207 George Street, Liverpool, NSW. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9601 2622

Phantom Zone, 285 Hunter Street, Newcastle, NSW. 2300. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 4929 5717

Phantom Zone, 101a Argyle Street, Parramatta, NSW 2150 Mon-Fri 9-6; Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, books, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9891 1848

Phantom Zone, 268 Crown Street, Wollongong, NSW. 2500. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, gn, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 4228 7393

Austria

Comic Treff, Getreidemarkt 2-4, 1010 Vienna. Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 10-1 (imp, back, gn, CCG) (0043) 11 586 76 27

Belgium

Forbidden Zone, 25 Rue de Tamines, 1060 Brussels. (3 floors; imp, back, merch, US/French, STO, toys) (0032 2) 534 63 67 (fax 538 24 52)

Canada

Connection MD, 1539 Van Horne Avenue, Montreal, Quebec H2V 1L4. Mon-Sat 11-6 (new, merch, back, CCG) (00)1 514 948 2627

Dragon Lady Comics & Paper Nostalgia, 609 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1B5. (00)1 416 536 7460

Little Shop of Heroes, 160 Wallace Avenue, South Listowel, Ontario N4W 1X9 (00)1 519 291 2281

Silver Snail Comic Shop, 367 Queen Street West, Toronto M5V 2A4. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs-Fri 11-8; Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (00)1 416 593 0889

France

Album, 67 boulevard St Germain, 75005 Paris. Mon-Sat 10-8; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, gn) (0033) 53 10 00 60

Album, 6 rue Dante, 75005 Paris. Mon-Sat 10-8; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, gn) (0033) 43 54 67 09

Alpha Omega, 25 rue de la Clef, 59800 Lille. Mon 2.30-7.30, Tue-Sat 10.30-12.30/2.30-7.30 (imp, back, French, merch, trading/gaming cards, toys, RPG, Wars/Trek, B5, L5R) (0033) 320 319 375

Astro City, 22 rue Masurel, 59800 Lille. Mon 3-7.30; Tue-Sat 10-12.30, 2-7.30 (imp, manga, cards, merch, kits) (0033) 320 55 1010

Impact Comics, 64 rue Condorcet, 75009 Paris. Mon-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, merch, CCG)(0033) 42 80 30 10

L'Antre des Dragons, 56 rue de Loup, 33000 Bordeaux. Mon-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, manga, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0033) 55 65 17378

Les Nageurs de Sable, 14 rue Courteline, 37058 Tours. Mon-Sat 11-1/2-7 (imp, back, cards, merch) (0033) 2 47 39 52 40

Pulps, 14 bld Morland, 75004 Paris. Mon-Sat 11-7 (imp, back, RPG) (0033) 1 42 72 55 25

Germany

Black Dog Comics, Rodenberg Strasse 9, 10439 Berlin. Mon-Fri 11-6.30, Sat 11-2 (imp, back, gn, t/cards) (0049) 30 4473 6486

Grober Unfug, Zossenerstrasse 32-33, 10961 Berlin. Mon-Sat 11-7 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (0049) 30 6940 1490

Greece

Metropolis Comics, 94 Metropoleos St, 54622 Thessaloniki. Mon-Sat 10.30-3.30/7.30-11.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0030) 3 193 7775

Solaris, 6 Botasi Str, 10682, Athens. Mon-Sat 9-3.30/5-8.30 (imp, back, gn, merch) (0030) 1 384 1065

Holland

Henk Lie's Comics & Manga Store, Zeeduk 104, 1012BB Amsterdam. Mon-Sat 11-6; Sun 11-9 (imp, cards, merch, CCG) (0031) 20 421 3688

Hungary

Troll Kepregenyta'r, Terez Krt 13, Budapest 1067. Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 10-1(imp, manga, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0036) 1 322 6026

Irish Republic

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 5-6 Crompton Quay, Dublin 2. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Thurs 10-7); Sun 12-5 (imp, back, ind, merch, u/g, UK, gn, STO) (0035) 3167 10688

Sub-City Comics, 2 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3167 71902

Sub-City Comics, Unit 10, Level 1, Corbettcourt Centre, Eyre Square, Galway. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3915 65994

The 3rd Place, Crow Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 2. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3163 36965

Italy

Avalon, via Battisti 9/b, Bologna. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10.30-1/2-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 051 234459

Avalon, via Pedriali 21, Forli. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 0543 33523

Avalon, via Settembrini 20, Milan. Mon 3.30-7.30, Tue-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 022 9400410

Avalon, via Foscolo 3, Padova. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7. (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch)(0039) 049 658290

Avalon, via Bissolati 68, Rome. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, back, gn, CCG, cards, merch)

Avalon, via Magenta 0, Torino. Mon 3.30-7, Tue-Sat 10.30-1, 2-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 011 5617252

Forbidden Planet, via Pinerolo 11/15, 00182 Rome (imp, back, gn) (0039) 06 70305702

Il Marchio Giallo, via Deghi Scipioni 116, Rome. Tue-Sat 10.30-1/2-7.30 (imp, back, merch, kits) (0039) 06 361 40 60

La Borsa del Fumetto, via Lecco 16, 20124 Milano. (imp, back, European and RPG, CCG) (0039) 11 5617252

Malaysia

The Mind Shop, Starhill Centre, Jalang Bukit Bintag, Kuala Lumpur. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 241 8871

The Mind Shop, S 58 Bandar Utama, Petaling Jaya. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 719 8246

The Mind Shop, Jin SS21/39, Petaling Jaya. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 717 6602

New Zealand

Heroes For Sale, Level 2, 62 Queen St, Auckland. Mon-Sat 10-7 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g)(0064) 9 307 0682

Whitcoulls Corner Branch, 210 Queen Street, Private Bag 92098, Auckland. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, s-p, merch, ind, u/g) (0064) 9 356 5400 (fax: 9 356 5408)

Portugal

BdMania, Rua das Flores 67-71 R/C, 1200 Lisboa. Mon-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, CCG, merch) (00351) 21 346 1207

Interzona, Centro Comercial Brasilia, Loja 203, Rua Luis Veaga Lertao 98-120, 6050 Porto. Mon-Sat 11-11 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (00351) 22 609 1460

Mundo Fantasma, Centro Comercial Brasilia, Rua Luis Veiga Leitao, 98/120, 1 Andar-Loja 203, 4050-399 Porto. Mon-Sat 11-11 (US imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (00351) 22 609 1460

South Africa

Euroniag, Shop 79A, East Rand Mall, Boksburg, Johannesburg. Mon-Sun 9-10 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (0027) 11 896 3773

Zed Bree's Comic Universe, Mediterr-anean Building, 24 Tenth Ave, Edenvale 1610 Gauteng. 9.30-6 (imp, merch, gn, CCG) 002711 453 4215 (fax 453 4459)

Spain

Gigamesh, RDA San Pedro 53, 08010 Barcelona. Mon-Sat 10-1.30/4.30-8 (imp, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0034) 3 246 6359

Sweden

Comics Heaven, Stora Nygatan 23, 11127 Stockholm. Mon-Sat 10-6.30 (imp, back, gn, merch)(0046) 8 202516

Switzerland

Analph Comicladen Strassburgstr, 10 PO Box 1030, 8004 Zürich. (0041) 1 2419695 fax 1 2403442

International Festivals

A listing of the world's major comics festivals and conventions. For further information, call the organisers on the phone, fax or e-mail numbers provided. To view updates, contact them on their websites. Organisers' estimates of their previous year's attendance is given in brackets.

January 27-30: France

ANGOULEME BD. Organisers: Festival International de la Bande Dessinee, 2 Place d l'Hotel de Ville, 16000 Angouleme, France. 0033 05 45 97 86 50. E-mail: b.monchart@labd.com. www.bdangouleme.com

February 25-27: United States

MEGACON 2005, Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando, Florida. Organisers MegaCon, PO Box 1097, Safety Harbor, FL 34695, USA. 001 727 796 5725. www.megaconvention.com

April 2-3: England

MEMORABILIA '05, NEC, Birmingham. Organisers: Memorabilia, Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa CV32 5SZ. 0870 224 8615. www.memorabilia.co.uk

May 13-15: England

COMIC EXPO 2, British Empire and Commonwealth Exhibition Hall and Ramada Plaza Hotel, Bristol. Organisers: Area 51 & Comics International. 01179 244655. E-mail: comicexpo@fsmail.net. Website: http://comicexpo.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk

May 14-15: England

LONDON EXPO, ExCel Convention Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, London. Organisers: London Expo (EW), PO Box 38727, London E10 7YH. 020 8523 1074. E-mail: info@londonexpo.com www.londonexpo.com

May 26-29: Switzerland

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE LA BANDE DESSINEE DE SIERRE. Organisers: Festival BD Sierre, CP 200, CH-3960 Sierre, Switzerland. 0041 27 455 90 43 fax: 0041 27 455 91 01. www.bdsierre.ch

May: Spain

THE 22ND BARCELONA INTERNATIONAL COMIC FESTIVAL. (2003 est: 85,000). Organisers: Ficomic, Palau, 4 Baixos, 08002 Barcelona, Spain. 0034 93 301 23 69. www.ficomic.com Date: TBA

May: Finland

ARCTIC COMICS FESTIVAL, KEMI. Organisers: The Arctic Comics Centre, Rautatienkatu 13 B, FIN-90100 Oulu, Finland. 00358 400 514 540. www.kemi.fi/sarjis Date: TBA

July 14-17: United States

COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL '05, San Diego, California. Organisers: Comic-Con International, PO Box 128458, San Diego, CA 92112-8458. 001 619 491 2475. www.comic-con.org

August 5-7: United States

WIZARD WORLD CHICAGO CON 2005. Organisers: Wizard World Chicago, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920-2064. 001 608 226 0200. www.wizarduniverse.com

August 26-28: Canada

CANADIAN NATIONAL COMIC BOOK EXPO 2005, Metro Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. www.hobbystar.com

August: England

MEMORABILIA '05, NEC, Birmingham. Organisers: Memorabilia, Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa CV32 5SZ. 0870 224 8615. www.memorabilia.co.uk Date: TBA

September 2-5: United States

DRAGON*CON 2005, Atlanta, Georgia. Organisers: Dragon*Con, PO Box 16459, Atlanta, GA 30321-9998. 001 770 909 0115. www.dragoncon.org

September 17-18: United States

BALTIMORE COMIC-CON, The Baltimore Convention Centre, One West Pratt Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201. 001 410 526 7410. www.comicon.com/baltimore

The letters **(FPI)** after entries indicate that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

Comics Publishers

North America

Unlike Europe, North American publishers invariably favour indie status to that of being labelled small press. This results in there being hundreds of comics publishers.

While circulations vary immensly, the following are the continent's major comicbook producers with titles printing between 5,000 and 150,000 copies. Contact telephone numbers are given where readily available. Website details can be found on the first page of the directory section.

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM, PO Box 1674 Station C, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4R2 (Cerebus)

ABSTRACT STUDIOS, PO Box 271487, Houston, TX 77277-1487 (Strangers in Paradise)

AC COMICS, PO Box 521216, Longwood, FL 32752-1216 (adventure titles, Golden Age superhero and western reprints)

ACCLAIM COMICS, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542 (game tie-in adventure, Valiant superhero imprint. dormant)
(00)1 516 656 5000

AiT/PLANET LAR, 2034 47th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116 (graphic novels)
(00)1 415 504 7516

ALTERNATIVE COMICS, 503 North West 37th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32609-2204 (alternative titles and graphic novels)
(00)1 352 373 6336

AMERICAN MEDIA CONSUMER ENTERTAINMENT, INC, 600 East Coast Avenue, Lantana, Florida 33464 (Cracked)
(00)1 561 586 1111

ANTARCTIC PRESS, 7272 Wurzbach Parkway , Suite 204, San Antonio, Texas TX 78240 (adventure and US manga titles)

ARCHIE COMIC PUBLICATIONS, 325 Fayette Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543 (humour titles)
(00)1 914 381 5155

AVATAR PRESS, 9 Triumph Drive, Urbana, IL 61802 (horror and fantasy titles) (00)1 217 384 2216

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT, 9744 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 402, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, CA 90212 (adventure titles; dormant)

BONGO ENTERTAINMENT, 1440 South Sepulveda Boulevard, 3rd Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (The Simpsons and Futurama and related humour titles)
(00)1 310 966 6168

CALIBER COMICS, 225 North Sheldon Road, Plymouth, MI 48170 (black and white adventure titles)
(00)1 734 462 0457

CARTOON BOOKS, PO Box 16973, Columbus, OH43216 (Bone and related titles)

CROSSGEN ENTERTAINMENT, INC, 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, FL 34677 (fantasy and adventure titles)
(00)1 813 891 1702

CRUSADE FINE ARTS LTD, PO Box 845, Bayport, NY 11705 (fantasy and adventure)
(00)1 631 472 2866

DARK HORSE COMICS, 10956 South East Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222 (adventure, licensed, US and Japanese manga)
(00)1 503 652 8815

DC COMICS, 1700 Broadway, NY 10019 (adventure and humour titles, MAD, Vertigo and Paradox Press imprints) (00)1 212 636 5400

DRAWN & QUARTERLY, PO Box 48056, Montreal, Quebec, H2V 4SB, Canada (black and white biog)

DREAMWAVE PRODUCTIONS, 11 Allstate Parkway, Suite 200, Markham, Ontario L3R 9T8, Canada (adventure titles)

DYNAMIC FORCES, 155 Ninth Avenue, Suite E, Runnemede, NJ 08078 (variant editions and limited edition merchandise)
(00)1 856 312 1040

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, 7563 Lake City Way North East, Seattle, Washington 98115 (adventure, biographical and Eros adult titles)
(00)1 206 524 1967

HARRIS COMICS, 1115 Broadway, 8th Floor, NY 10010 (Vampirella, fantasy and horror titles)
(00)1 212 807 7100

HEAVY METAL, 100 North Village Road, Suite 12, Rockville Center, NY 11570 (adult fantasy magazines and spin-off editions)

HUMANOIDS PUBLISHING, PO Box 931658, Hollywood, California CA 90093 (US-European editions)

IMAGE COMICS, 1071 North Batavia Street, Suite A, Orange, CA 92867 (adventure titles)
(00)1 714 2880200

MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, 10th Floor, East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016 (adventure, humour and licensed titles) (00)1 212 5764000

NBM PUBLICATIONS, 185 Madison Avenue, Suite 1504, New York, NY 10016 (adult fantasy graphic novels and magazines)

ONI PRESS, 6336 South East Milwaukie Avenue, PMB 30, Portland, OR 97202 (adventure titles)

RADIO COMIX, 11765 West Avenue, PMB #117, San Antonio, TX 78216 (anthropomorphic manga). (00)1 210 3487195

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT, INC, PO Box 834, Stanhope, NJ 07802 (adult titles)

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS PUBLISHING, 577 South Market Street, San Jose, CA 95113 (black and white fantasy titles)
(00)1 9718929

TOP SHELF PRODUCTIONS, PO Box 1282, Marietta, GA 30061-1282 (alternative and biographical titles) (00)1 770 4276395

TWOMORROWS PUBLISHING, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614 (comics feature and history magazines and books)
tel: (00)1 919 449 0344
fax: (00) 1 919 449 0327

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS, PO Box 77010, San Francisco, CA 94107 (English translated manga titles)

WaRP GRAPHICS, 2600 South Road, Suite 44/242, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 (Elfquest and spin-off titles)

United Kingdom

The following are major UK comics and graphic novel publishers. If calling from outside of the UK, you should drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe and Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

AP COMICS, Suite 3, 7 French Row, St Albans, Herts AL3 5DU (adventure titles)

COM.X, The Dickens Inn, Kirk Street, London WC1N 2DG (adventure titles) 020 7831 7777

DC THOMSON, 2 Albert Square, Dundee DD1 9QJ (humour and adventure titles, pocket books and annuals)

DENNIS PUBLISHING LTD, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD (humour and adventure titles, pocket books and annuals)
020 7907 6000

EGMONT MAGAZINES LTD, Fourth Floor, 184-192 Drummond Street, London NW1 3HP (humour, licensed and pre-school titles)
020 7380 6430

HAMLYN BOOKS, 2-4 Heron Quays, London E14 4JB (graphic novels) 020 7531 8400

JOHN BROWN CITRUS PUBLISHING, The New Boathouse, 136-142 Bramley Road, London W10 6SR (albums)
020 7565 3000

KNOCKABOUT COMICS, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (humour titles and underground comix and graphic novels)
020 8969 2945

PANINI COMICS (UK), Panini House, Coach and Horses Passage, The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 5UJ (humour and adventure comics, Marvel licensed titles)
01892 500100

PULP THEATRE ENTERTAINMENT, Mermaid Court, 1 Mermaid House, London Bridge, London SE1 1HR (adventure titles) 020 7403 0378

REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS LTD, The Studio, Brewer Street, Oxford OX1 1QN (Judge Dredd The Megazine and 2000 AD)
01865 792201

THE REDAN COMPANY, Canon Court East, Abbey Lawn, Shrewsbury SY2 5DE (pre-school humour and licenced titles) 01743 364433

SAVOY BOOKS, 446 Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 3BW (adult comics magazines, books and graphic novels)
0161 445 5771

TITAN ENTERTAINMENT GROUP LTD, Titan House, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP (licensed graphic novels, books, magazines and comics)
020 7620 0200

France

The following are the country's major comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0033 becomes 011 33

ALBIN MICHEL, 22 rue Huyghens, 75014 Paris (albums)
(0033) 1 42 79 10 00

CASTERMAN, 36 rue du Chemin Vert, 75011, Paris (albums and manga titles)

DARGAUD, 15-27 rue Moussorgski, 75018 Paris (albums and manga titles)
tel: (0033) 1 53 26 32 32
fax: (0033) 1 53 26 32 00

DELCOURT, 54 rue d'Hauteville, 75010 Paris (albums and comics)
tel: (0033) 1 56 03 92 20
fax: (0033) 1 56 03 92 30

FLUIDE GLACIAL, 33 avenue du Main, BP 187, 75755 Paris (comics and albums)
(0033) 1 43 20 23 96

GLENAT, 31-33 rue Ernest Renan, 92130 Issy-Les-Moulineaux (albums and manga titles)
tel: (0033) 1 41 46 11 41
fax: (0033) 1 41 46 11 13

J'AI LU, 84 rue de Grenelle, 75007 Paris (licenced Japanese manga titles) (0033) 1 44 39 34 70

LES HUMANOIDES ASSOCIES, 5 Passage Piver, 75011 Paris (albums)
tel: (0033) 1 49 29 88 88
fax: (0033) 1 49 29 88 89

SEMIC FRANCE, 44316 Nantes Cedex 03 (licenced comics and albums) (0033) 2 51 86 14 14

Italy

The following are the country's major comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0039 becomes 011 39

SERGIO BONELLI EDITORE, via Buonarroti 38, 20145 Milano (black and white comics)

CULT COMICS, viale Emilio Po' 380, 41100 Modena (Image and Dark Horse licensed titles)

MAGIC PRESS, Zona industriale via Ragusa 18, 00040 Pavona, Roma (Vertigo and WildStorm licensed titles)
(0039) 06 93020361

STAR COMICS, strada Selvette 1bis/1 Bosco (PG) (comics and black and white manga titles)

ASTORINA S.R.I., via Boccaccio 32, 20123 Milano (Diabolik original and reprint black and white)

KING COMICS, via Pinerolo 3, 00182 Roma (comics)

Spain

The following are the country's comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0034 becomes 011 34

NORMA EDITORAL, Fluvià 89, 08019 Barcelona (licensed DC and Dark Horse comics and albums)
0034 93 303 68 20

EDITORIAL PLANETA-DE AGOSTINI, SA, Aribau 185, 08021 Barcelona (licensed Dark Horse comics and albums)

TOUTAIN EDITOR, SA, Diagonal 325, E-08009 Barcelona (licensed Marvel, Dark Horse, Chaos!, Image and manga comics and albums) 0034 93 344 06 00

EDICIONES LA CÚPULA, Plaza de las Beatas 3, E-08003 Barcelona (adult comics and albums)
0034 32 682 8 05

Mail Order Specialists

Key to abbreviations used:

w/s	= wholesale available	CoBRA	= Comic Book Retailers' mail order protection scheme
dis	= bulk discount terms		
cat	= phone/write for catalogue	cc	= major credit cards accepted
s-cat	= sae for catalogue		
wants	= wants lists accepted	sae	= send stamped, addressed envelope with enquiry
s-wants	= sae with wants lists		

When telephoning from outside the UK, drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe & Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

Golden Age

Generally acknowledged as being published between 1938 and 1945, the first age of superhero comics, but herein designated to cover all pre-Silver Age American comics.

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh St, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Goldust Comics, 67 St John's Wood High Street, London NW8 7NL (high grade, cat, wants, cc) 020 8341 5558

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax: 680686)

Silver Age

*Accepted as starting in 1955 with DC's superhero rebirth through **Detective Comics #225** (introducing the Martian Manhunter) and **Showcase #4** (introducing the Barry Allen Flash). Herein covering titles up to late 1960s.*

Colmore Comics & Collectibles, Vienna House, Starley Way, Birmingham B37 7GN (cat, cc, high grade, CGC) 0121 767 1803 fax: 0121 767 1910

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh St, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

East Coast Comics UK, 28 Acton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 7LG (high grade, s-want, cc, sae) 01502 578385 (day) 560727 (eve)

Goldust Comics, 67 St John's Wood High Street, London NW8 7NL (high grade, cat, wants, cc) 020 8341 5558

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Quicksilver Comics, PO Box 73, Ossett WF5 0YQ (s-cat, dis, wants, cc, CoBRA) 01924 270500 (fax: 270919)

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax 680686)

NEW **Steve Rock Comics**, 4 Orme Drive, Clevedon, Somerset BS21 7HD (Silver-Bronze, cat, wants, sae)

Post-Silver Age

Comics from 1970 to date: from Bronze Age , Marvel Age and Lead Age up to Platinum Age, Gimmick Age, Image Age and beyond. Historians will doubtless eventually decide on a name.

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Tarpaulin Books and Comics, 5 Oak Close, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3EZ (wants, s-cat) 01842 820139

Hot Comics

Current or key titles, first issues or first appearances of major characters. Investment titles for speculators willing to gamble.

A Place in Space, 101 Church Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RN (wants, cc, dis) 020 8686 2400

Comix-shop. co.uk, 7a High St, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1JN (wants, cat, cc) 01628 777998

Advance Imports

US comics are not generally available in UK newsagents, except for some sea-freight shipped low-cover price DCs and Marvels, and can only be found through specialists in the rest of the world. The following companies offer air-shipped copies from all of the major US publishers.

Ace Comics, 63/64 High Street, Colchester, Essex (wants, cat, CoBRA, cc) 01206 561912

NEW **Chapter 12**, 2 Prospect Place, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 1LE (wants, s-cat, CoBRA) 01843 860354

Comix-shop.co.uk, 7a High St, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1JN (wants, cat, cc) 01628 777998

86th Floor Comics & Cards, 6 Shipley Common Lane, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 8TR (dis, cat, cc) 0115 9443009

Forbidden Planet Megastore, 179 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8JR (s-cat cc) 020 7420 3666

Gosh! Strips by Mail, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH 020 7636 1011

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse*, PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

Red Hot Comics, The Warehouse Block D Unit 8, Glenwood Business Park, Glenwood Place, Glasgow G45 9UH (CoBRA, w/s, dis, wants, cc) tel/fax: 0141 630 0049

Limited Editions

Many high-profile miniseries and one-shots are also available in limited, numbered and often autographed editions (s&n). New titles, to acquire copyright, can also appear in small print-run "ashcan" editions (ash).

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (CoBRA, cc, ash, s&n, cat) 020 8446 3464

Trading Cards

Several mail order dealers carry a range of non-sports cards and related peripherals (files, folders, sleeves).

Beyond Comics, 76 Harlescott Road, Nunhead, London SE15 3BZ (s-cat, s-wants, sae, CoBRA) tel/fax: 020 7564 4213

John McDonald: Non-Sport Trading Cards, 20 Alder Grove, Coatbridge, Lanarkshire ML5 3PT (cat, wants) tel/fax: 01236 433358

Old British Titles

The popularity of old British comics continues to increase as more dealers expand into this area. The following specialise in such titles.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

NEW **30th Century Comics**, 18 Lower Richmond Road, Putney, London SW15 1JP (cat, wants, CoBRA, cc) 020 8788 2052

Weird Fantasy, 19 Decoy Road, Ormesby, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR29 3LG (s-cat, s-wants, annuals specialist)

Merchandise

Comics, film and TV-related t-shirts, posters, video games, badges, toys, action figures, etc.

Off World: The Sci-Fi Store, 142 Market Halls, Arndale Centre, Luton, Beds LU1 2TP. (specialists in Star Trek, Star Wars and sci-fi collectables) 01582 736256

Sci-Fi Merchandise Direct (FPI) and **Gear for Games (FPI)** Maldon, Essex CM9 4XD (cat) 01621 877222

Original Art

With artists having their originals returned by publishers, an increasing number of pages are now being made available for collectors.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh St, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax: 680686)

Peripherals

Acid-free protection for comics. Backing boards, protective bags, storage boxes, etc.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Just Comics, 65 Station Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs PE28 2TH (w/s only, CollectorLine™ distributor) 01487 824895 824896

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse*, PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

General Fantasy

As well as comics old and new, some suppliers also provide catalogues of multi-media fantasy, covering TV, film, trading cards and toys.

Forbidden Planet Mail Order, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP (cat) 020 7803 1900 (fax: 7803 1901)

Sci-Fi Merchandise Direct (FPI) and **Gear for Games (FPI)** Maldon, Essex CM9 4XD (cat) 01621 877222

Manga Titles

English language translations of Japanese comics and US titles drawn in the Japanese style.

United Publications, 85 Croydon Road, Keston, Kent BR2 8HU (ind, back, cat, wants, cc) 020 8325 9507

Alternative & Biographical

The following carry an extensive range of biographical and slice-of-life comicbooks and graphic novels (Fantagraphics, Maus, Crumb, Pekar...)

Gosh! Strips by Mail, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH (wants) 020 7636 1011

Knockabout Comics, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (w/s, s-cat, cc) 020 8969 2945 (fax: 8968 7614)

Page 45, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY 0115 9508045

Comics Auctions

Accepting lots from the general public, comics auctions provide an alternative way for collectors to sell their valuable comics. The following accept items for sale, as well as providing regular catalogues for mail order bids.

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh St, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Distributors

Anybody considering opening a comics shop or becoming a mail order dealer can obtain further information about the supply of titles from the following who bulk air import US and European comics and related items on a weekly basis.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP (graphic novels, art books, comics, remainders, film and TV, popular culture) 020 8768 0022

Diamond Comic Distributors, 2nd Floor, Warton House, 150 High Street, London E15 2NP (US and European comics, cards and related items) 020 8536 5730 (fax: 8536 5736)

Red Route Distribution, Unit 24, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (US & European comics/ graphic novels, back-list specialists) 020 8960 5855

Turnaround Publisher Services, Unit 3, Olympia Trading Estate, Coburg Road, Wood Green, London N22 6TZ (graphic novels, art books, film and TV, popular culture) 020 8829 3000

Mail Order Dealers:

CI's Mail Order Index is the industry's most cost-effective and highly-targeted way to reach a huge dedicated audience in excess of 40,000 readers every month. It costs only £4 ($6 US) per entry per issue to appear and is bookable in advance as a six-issue series. Send pre-payment of £24/$36 (plus £4.20 VAT for UK advertisers) per category with your details to:

Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International. Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail: comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk

The letters **(FPI)** after entries indicates that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

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Whether for publication or not, all advertisements must be accompanied by full name, home address and daytime phone number of advertiser.

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• FOR SALE ads (and dealer wants/announcements) are charged:
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Full payment, to Comics International, must accompany wordage.

CI Classified, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

For Sale

Comics, TV and film memorabilia and collectables for sale. Large selection of Marvel, DC and indies. Toys, original production animation cels, screen-used props, etc. We are a long-established London mart and NEC Memorabilia trader, now online at www.quitebizarre.co.uk. Not on the Internet? Call 020 8699 2196 with your wants.

Comics clearout. All Spider-Man and Daredevil titles from 1962 to current. Complete runs, some made up with reprint titles. Loads of other Marvel, some key titles including first Romita Sr work at Marvel on **Avengers**, **Marvel Masterworks**, trade paperbacks, reprints of key issues, DC, Eagle/Quality and indies. There's something for everyone! Many rare issues at bargain prices. Discounts on bulk orders. Everything must go! Contact me with your wants lists. Dermot 07752 434935.

For sale: Nine 1940 **Beano** comics. Fairly good condition. Slightly torn at edges but no stains or marks. Offers to 0115 928 3970.

Half-price sale: many thousands of Marvel, DC and indies, all at half price. For full list send an sae to Mike Cruden, 18 Backbower Lane, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 5NS. Call 0161 366 8226 or e-mail mcruden@btinternet.com, or log on to http://members.lycos.co.uk/mcruden for full lists.

Our new mail order comics and graphic novel list is now available. We specialise in Vertigo titles and indies, but also have a large range of DC and Marvel, and indies from Avatar to Top Shelf. Send a 47p sae to Chapter 12, 2 Prospect Place, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 1LE or e-mail your wants list to chapter12@bond007.co.uk.

British comics for sale, including annuals. Callers welcome. Phone 07930 503455 or e-mail pauldavis8818@hotmail.com.

DC, Marvel, Image, Dark Horse, manga and misc indies: **Blade**, **Hellboy**, **Madman**, **Kiss**, **Global Frequency**, **Transmetropolitan**, **Stray Bullets**, **Jack Staff**, **Fantastic Four**, **Appleseed**, **Alita**, Kyle Baker, **The Simpsons**, **2000AD** (early Progs). Mainstream superheroes to offbeat indies, all near mint at 25p, 45p, 60p and 95p. Carded action figures, Batman Animated Catwoman £6, Spider Jerusalem £5, boxed Aunt May (classic covers) £6, *Star Wars: Episode I* Queen Amidala (red senate gown, 12-inch) boxed £15. Always willing to trade for comics on my wants list. Call on 0151 632 4640 or write for sale list: Anthony, 20 Grove Road, Hoylake, Wirral CH47 2DT.

Wanted

Advertisers are reminded that Wanted ads must be no longer than 50 words (including address), and only single insertion private advertisements can be published free of charge.

Wanted: British annuals: **Catweazle**, **Please Sir!**, **Blondie** (Debbie Harry), **Batman**, **Superboy**, **Superman** (1950s and '60s only). Weekly comics: **TV Comic** (1960s and '70s), **Huckleberry Hound** and **Yogi Bear** comics. Gold Key: **The Beatles – Yellow Submarine**, **Supercar** and **Fireball XL5**. Corgi models. Small-sized pin-up magazines: **66**, **Spic**, **Span**, etc. And anything on Bettie Page. John Balfour, Westerstraat 67-3, Amsterdam, Holland 1015 LW.

Wanted: **The Original Astro Boy** 1-19 (now). 1970s UK weeklies: **Vulcan**, **Valiant** and **Lion** (any condition), **Strangehaven** 1-16, **Marvel's Greatest Comics** 35-96. Will pay cash or trade against items on my latest list. Contact Anthony Pick, 20 Grove Road, Hoylake, Wirral CH47 2DT.

Wanted: Set of **The Hulk Weekly** Marvel UK (with *Black Knight* strip). Will swap or buy. Contact David on 01494 677262.

Wanted: **Battlestar Galactica** (2004) American Magazine Special (DC) Deathstroke The Terminator comics (DC) Teen Titans comics (all volumes). All must be in very fine to near mint condition. Please send details and prices to Neal Clutterbuck, 12 Riddimore Avenue, Redhill, Hereford HR2 7LJ.

Announcements

Fanzine and small press titles must not be offered for sale before being printed. To verify publication, a sample copy must be sent in along with the advertising copy (50 words max). Single bookings only, so everybody gets a chance!

The Lord of the Rings, a 40-page critical appreciation of Tolkien's masterpiece, written by Mike Cruden, with full-page illustrations by Tony Schofield, £1 (including p&p) from Mike Cruden, 18 Backbower Lane, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 5NS.

Better late than never – issue 12 of **Dogbreath** the **Strontium Dog** fanzine has been unleashed on an unsuspecting world. 40 plus pages of strips, articles and photo romance. Send £2.75 cheque/postal order to Dr Bob/A. Kear, Flat 11, Beaufort Court, 1 Beaufort Street (off Stapleton Road), Easton, Bristol BS5 0SQ.

Parataxis 4: the super-student spectacular moves into its second phase as we meet... The Inspector! Will our heroes end up breaking rocks in a hot sun? Send two first clas stamps to Bionic Comics, 94 Tippett Rise, Reading RG2 0DZ.

The O Men 25: The Eagle Award-nominated super-soap continues! Miss Scarlet reveals some secrets, Rob and Abby get a surprise – and someone dies... Send £1 to Martin, 11a Gatestone Road, Upper Norwood, London SE19 3AT. Collections of early **O Men** issues are also now available! Check out the website: www.theomen.free-online.co.uk.

The Immeasurable Adventures of Gorky Park by Dave Hughes is available now. Mature readers. Send cheque for £3 to David Hughes, Stonechat Productions, PO Box 148, Barrow-in-Furness LA14 3WX.

Do you worry about juvenile delinquency? Then stand well back, as **Comics Retrospective** 13 looks back at the lot of it, in over six decades of **Beano**, **Dandy** and the DC Thomson line! Plus the Avengers! Available now, £1.40 from Tony Ingram, 3 Lower Harlings, Shotley Gate, Ipswich, Suffolk IP9 1QE.

Sancho 1 from 20,000 Leagues – a darkly comic tale of elderly paranormal adventurers, ex-exorcists, zombies, demons and possessed naked ladies. US size, colour cover, 32 pages of old skool black and white art and Mexican occult thrills! £3 from Alan Nolan, 14 Connawood Green, Bray, Co. Wicklow, Ireland or www.20000-leagues.com.

This is not to be missed! Featuring low-brow art, a prose on fear of flying and comics about regret, selfishness, punishment and salesmen of the old west plus lots more! **Cavity** £2.50 (£2 re-orders) contact dzgreene@hotmail.com if it's not in your local shop.

Enjoy encouragement and feedback from others creating their own comics. The Temple APA is open to new members. Write to David Morris (central mailer), 235 Sturminster Road, Stockwood, Bristol BS14 8EW.

Artist wanted to collaborate with writer on professional comics strip to send to major publishers. Send photocopied art samples to J.A. Short, 20 Grants Avenue, Bournemouth BH1 4NR.

Cartoonist/comics artist seeking work/collaboration. Most things considered. Samples available on request. Martin Street, 30 Farmhouse Road, Short Heath, Willenhall WV12 4AU.

Original comicbook art. Always wished you could afford the prices? Now you can. Stunning images of your favourite characters or from your own designs. Example art available on request. Call 07833 111549 for details.

Wanted for non-profit fanzine: pencillers and inkers. I have scripts and character designs waiting for the right candidates. Please forward your six-page samples (panel work as well as pin-ups, please) to Christopher Herbert, 9 Stretton Road, Leicester.

Inker wanted to work on humour strip for submission to US syndicates. Please send samples (copies not originals) to Captain Wonder Cartoons, 31 Dalboyne Pk, Lisburn, Co Antrim, BT28 3BU or e-mail captain wondercartoons@hotmail.com.

Comic Societies

Join The Eagle Society, dedicated to the memory of Britain's National Strip Cartoon Weekly – The Eagle 1950-1969. For just £18 per year (cheques to The Eagle Society) members receive our quarterly journal **Eagle Times**, as well as the chance to attend social gatherings and meet original Eagle contributors. Write to: Keith Howard, 25a Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2UA. E-mail: rsheaf@npg.org.uk

The Comics Creators Guild for industry veterans and aspiring professionals, the largest comics organisation in Europe. Monthly meetings, newsletter, exclusive publications, free legal advice, special discounts and more. For further info contact: Comics Creators Guild, 22 St James Mansions, West End Lane, West Hampstead, London NW6 2AA. www.comicscreators.org.uk

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Comics International's *Classified* section has turned more than one £5 "For Sale" advertiser into a big-time full page dealer.

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... A spare room which is no longer spare.

... A garage which is pining for a car.

Classified can help you not only clear that space, but earn you money while doing so. More than 4,500 such ads have been placed on this page, with regular dealers coming back each issue.

It costs only £5 to place a 50-word For Sale general announcement. Or £10 for a 100-word list ad, detailing issues and prices. Ads can appear within a week of you sending them...

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2005
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A refreshments counter and bar will be open next to the venue.

HOW TO GET THERE. BUS: 68, 91, 168 or 188 to Woburn Place. UNDERGROUND: Piccadilly Line to Russell Square. NATIONAL RAIL: Euston and Kings Cross are within walking distance of the venue.

FUTURE DATES: 3RD APRIL, 15TH MAY, 19TH JUNE 2005

Dealers: for table availability phone 020 7476 6873

www.comicmart.co.uk

Events

A summary of all the events advertised this issue

January 2005

22/1 **Manchester:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p56)

23/1 **Liverpool:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street, Liverpool ..... (p56)

February

5/2 **Glasgow:** Glasgow Comic & Toy Fair (Tsunami Appeal fundraiser) with special guests, Henry Wood Hall, Claremont Street ..... (p32)

5/2 **Leeds:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)

12/2 **Birmingham:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Aston University, Students' Guild Hall, Aston Triangle ..... (p56)

13/2 **Exeter:** Comics & Sci-Fi Fair with special guests, Phoenix Arts Centre, Gandy Street ..... (p50)

19/2 **Nottingham:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling Street, Nottingham ..... (p56)

20/2 **London:** The National Collectors' Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)

26/2 **Bedford:** Simon Bisley, Liam Sharp, Glenn Fabry, Dez Skinn and Kev Walker signing at Close Encounters ..... (p7)

March

12/3 **Manchester:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p56)

13/3 **Liverpool:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street, Liverpool ..... (p56)

19/3 **Sheffield:** Comic Mart & Card Show, The Royal Society for the Blind, Main Hall, Mappin Street (off West Street) ..... (p56)

April

2/4 **Leeds:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)

3/4 **London:** The National Collectors' Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)

9/4 **Newcastle:** Comic Mart & Card Show, University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road ..... (p56)

16/4 **Nottingham:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling Street, Nottingham ..... (p56)

23/4 **Birmingham:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Aston University, Students' Guild Hall, Aston Triangle ..... (p56)

30/4 **Leeds:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)

May

7/5 **Manchester:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p56)

8/5 **Liverpool:** Comic Mart & Card Show, Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street, Liverpool ..... (p56)

13/5 **Bristol:** ProCon 2, Ramada Plaza Hotel, Bristol ..... (p67)

13-15/5 **Bristol:** Comic Expo, Ramada Plaza Hotel, Bristol ..... (p67)

14/5 **Glasgow:** Glasgow Comic & Toy Fair, Henry Wood Hall, Claremont Street, Glasgow ..... (p32)

15/5 **London:** The National Collectors' Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)

Please note: the above listing of UK comics, trading card and related events is free to Comics International display advertisers only.

COMIC EXPO
plus ProCon 2

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EMPIRE AND COMMONWEALTH EXHIBITION HALL
and
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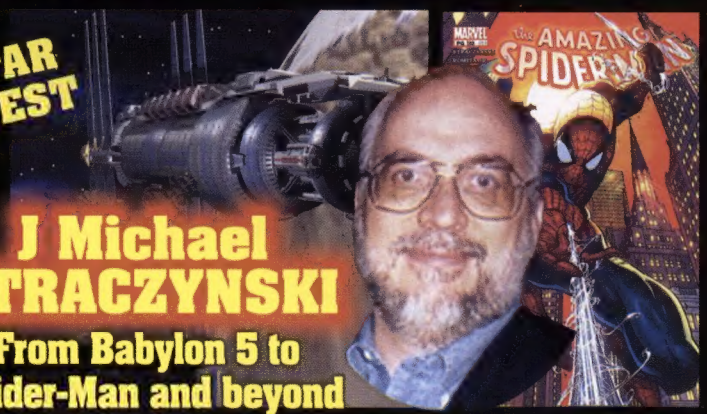

J Michael STRACZYNSKI
From Babylon 5 to Spider-Man and beyond

UPDATE
Just confirmed...

Ian CHURCHILL
DC's latest star exclusive

Plus. . . JOHN (NIKOLAI DANTE) BURNS, JOHN (HITMAN) McCREA, DAVID (DISTRICT X) HINE, PAUL (JACK STAFF) GRIST, CARL (THRUD) CRITCHLOW, THUNDERBIRDS' GRAHAM BLEATHMAN, ALBION'S LEAH MOORE & JOHN REPPION, SIMON (SINISTER DEXTER) DAVIS and lots more!

MAY 13-15, 2005

ProCon 2 *Free for all pro and semi-pro creators*
Featuring one-to-one pro interviews with Straczynski, Oeming & Mack
FRIDAY 13/5: From 2pm until very, very late

COMIC EXPO
SAT 14/5: 12 Noon - 6:00pm
SUN 15/5: 11:00am - 5:00pm

Info: 0117 924 4655

For full creator/events listings and updates, log on to www.comicexpo.net

Previously announced guest Herb Trimpe regrets that, due to a combination of work and personal matters, he is unable to attend Comic Expo.

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